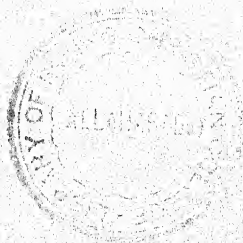


THE CHRISTIAN IN POLITICS



*By the same Author*

FAITH AND SOCIETY (Longmans, 1932).

RELIGION IN SOCIAL ACTION. Christian Challenge Series. (Centenary Press, 1936).

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*With C. E. Hudson*

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Essays in Catholic Social Construction.  
(Faber & Faber, 1945).

# THE CHRISTIAN IN POLITICS

BY

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EDITOR OF "CHRISTENDOM"



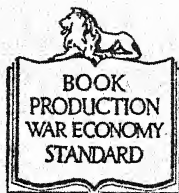
LONDON

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING  
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C.2

TO  
HENRY H. SLESSER  
THE CHRISTIAN IN POLITICS  
1922-1929  
IN ADMIRATION AND AFFECTION

*First published . . . . 1946*



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE  
CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORISED  
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*Made in Great Britain*



## FOREWORD

**P**OLITICS was the subject of the 19th Summer School of Sociology, held under the auspices of the Church Union, in 1943. Though I had some share in the preparation and conduct of the School, it may well be that whatever is of value in this book owes its inspiration to those who contributed to its deliberations. To them I can make only a general acknowledgment.

I must thank two of my friends more specifically: Dr. V. A. Demant for suggestions in regard to the first three chapters, and Mr. Philip Mairet for some material incorporated in the last.

The substance of the greater part of chapter 2 appeared in the form of "Notes on the Way" in *Time and Tide* and is republished here by kind permission of the editor.

The extracts from the pamphlet *Religion and Politics*, by the Rev. Canon Charles Smyth, published by the S.P.C.K., which are reproduced in chapter 6, appear by kind permission of the author and publishers.

The dedication represents a small acknowledgment of a friendship and an inspiration lasting over thirty years.

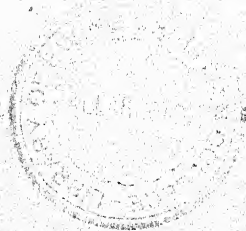
M.B.R.

August, 1945.



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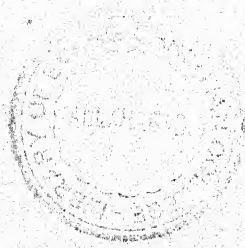
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## THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

THE subject of this book is the function of the Church and the rôle of the Christian in politics—politics, that is, as we know them in Britain to-day and as we may suppose them to develop in the Britain of to-morrow. Thus its purpose is essentially practical. I do not mean by this that there will be in this book no discussion of principle or consideration of theory. Action taken without reference to principle and practice which has no theory behind it cannot properly be called practical. What I mean is that I shall not be dealing with the deeper philosophical problems involved in the relations of Christianity and politics: those, for example, which concern the Christian doctrine of freedom or the Christian view of the nature of the State, problems which, very properly, have been the main preoccupation of so many Christian thinkers and scholars. They have dealt with these matters far better than I could hope to do, and there is no need to add one more book to the discussion of subjects so ably and so amply covered.\* But we have had a good deal less discussion of the problems of Christian policy in the social situation of to-day, nor has very much consideration been given to the special difficulties with which that situation, especially in its most recent developments, confronts those who seek to take action in the Christian name. Nearly everyone nowadays is ready to agree that “religion must have a message for the whole of human life”. It is not always realized, however, that to formulate and to deliver

\* I would particularly recommend: *The Theology of Politics*, by Nathaniel Micklem, 1941. *Christianity and the State*, by William Temple, 1928. *Christian Polity*, by V. A. Demant, 1936.



such a message effectively involves not only courage but knowledge, and not least knowledge of the actual social "set-up" to which that message must be relevant. And we need not only good will but good thinking, thinking about man as he is in God's sight and as he is in the social environment of to-day.

The first thing that the Christian must realize if he is to be anything but either a hypocrite or a nuisance in public affairs is that between the spheres of religion and politics there exists, and must always exist, a tension, a tug between claims and ideals which are absolute and possibilities and policies which are relative. There are two ways of escape from this tension, both of which are really evasions, though not always conscious evasions, of the responsibility which God lays upon those who acknowledge him to serve him while striving also to serve their day and generation. One that has hitherto been the more common is to say that religion is essentially a private matter, and that Christian standards cannot be applied to political conduct. It is hardly necessary at this time of day to combat this line of argument. In the last twenty years three great gatherings of Christians\* have been held in this country, a primary purpose of which was to expose and break down this fallacy; those who cling to it do so in the face of conclusions arising from the most searching investigation of the whole subject by many of the greatest minds in English religion. But there has more recently developed an opposite tendency which appears to be, and often is, the outcome of the highest scruples, yet is in effect equally an escape from reality and responsibility. This

\* In 1924 at Birmingham (COPEC), representing all the chief Christian communions in Great Britain. In 1937 at Oxford ("Church, Community and State"), representing the bodies now united in the World Council of Churches. In 1941 at Malvern, under the Archbishop's presidency, representing every diocese of the Church of England.



outlook is not confined to Christians, though it is, perhaps naturally, most often found amongst them. Professor Brogan has stigmatized it as Perfectionism, and he finds it to be a weakness to which we as a people are particularly prone.

The pursuit in politics of moral and intellectual perfection to the disregard of the possible is one of the greatest moral and intellectual sins of high-minded, or at any rate righteously-minded, "Anglo-Saxons." . . . The man who will be content with nothing less than a perfect solution to his private problems, who insists on the infallibility of his own judgment and the right to expect impeccability from his friends and colleagues, is rightly regarded as pathological, and lucky if he is only kept under observation. But the same type, when this attitude is transferred to public affairs, claims the respect due to superior wisdom and is entitled to lecture, not to say hector, the more sensible and less credulous members of the community. It used to be thought easier to arrange the affairs of a small circle that one knew intimately than to decide what ought to be done when the problem was made more complex by a great increase in scale. But the new quack doctors of political medicine have changed all that. Get the problem big enough, tackle all the problems at once; insist not merely that nothing but the best is good enough for you, but that nothing but the perfect solution is good enough for you. Abolish war and poverty and intolerance and racial discrimination and religious bias and pride and sadism—all at one go. . . . Time is no object and unless a political cure lasts for ever it is not worth having. . . . Both England and America are full of people who . . . want an eternity and a perfection that their ancestors wisely expected only in the next world.\*

Professor Brogan expresses his point with a vehemence

\* *The English People* (1943), pp. 8-9.

that may perhaps appear exaggerated, but it is a very real point. And it is a point with which this book must necessarily be much concerned. For there is a sense in which the Christian must always think even of human issues in terms of perfection, though from his knowledge of the universality of human sin and the nature of human limitation he should be the last person to expect it of any terrestrial arrangements. Moreover, the Christian will always be, or always ought to be, especially conscious of the "problem of means", the need to be ever on guard against the quest of the good by methods which contradict good. He will seldom find an easy answer to this problem in any specific case, but he must never give up looking for an answer. And, finally, in a world in which a majority of his neighbours do not acknowledge—though they may well be influenced by—his sanctions and his standards, a post-Christian world in fact, he will often have to ask himself on what terms he will be justified in acting with them. Can he play the game if he is not consulted about the rules? Perhaps not, in this instance or that. But merely to say "I won't play if I can't have things my own way" may in fact represent rather the indulgence of self-righteousness than a selfless determination to make the best of the situation in which God is calling on him for a positive response.

The tension between religion and politics is real, it is inescapable, and if we do try to escape it we shall fall into futility. But it is important to realize from what it is that that tension derives. It does not arise from religion dealing with the "higher" side of man's nature and politics with the "lower", or from a clash between spiritual and material. Applied to religion and politics these are false antitheses; the true antithesis, as the "ages of faith" knew, though they did not always rightly understand the nature of it, and still less of its implications, is between eternal and

temporal, between man faced with heaven and man faced with history.\* Man works under limitations which are broadly of three kinds: the limitations of his disposition to sin, the limitations of his human nature, and the limitations of his biological and historical inheritance. In politics the first demands the coercive action of the State; the second requires society as a sphere of organization; the third produces the community as an historical entity bequeathing tradition and the sentiment we know as patriotism, both of which may operate with good or evil results. But all three limitations vitally condition the character of politics; the first two in a general way, the third in regard to the developments possible in and desirable for any particular community. And of the three that which the Christian has most to bear in mind is the first, not only because it is integral to his whole view of man, but because it is in regard to it that his diagnosis of the human situation tends to differ most radically from that of those who reject the Christian faith. Non-Christian views of the world and of man incline to be either too pessimistic or too optimistic. The Hindu view of the world, for example, is fundamentally pessimistic: it tends to see existence either as an illusion or as a snare. Philosophical pessimism of this sort is so foreign to our western habit of mind that it has never been influential here outside small and essentially academic circles.† But there is another sort of pessimism, a pessimism about man, which has at certain periods had a considerable influence on

\* See below, chapter 5.

† It is interesting, nevertheless, to notice the remarkable popularity at and just after the turn of the last century of Fitzgerald's version of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám. This poem more or less explicitly bases its hedonistic outlook on a complete scepticism as to there being any discoverable meaning in the universe. Its popularity among the upper classes of a nominally Christian Edwardian England is a revealing fact.

politics, alike in the realms of theory and practice. This view so stresses man's corruption, to the neglect both of his better nature and of the operation upon him of God's grace, that it dismisses all moral ideas and impulses in politics as illusory and considers the public activities of mankind simply as the sphere of a struggle for power. This outlook, commonly though perhaps not altogether justly described as Machiavellian, in so far as it is accepted, does much to establish the state of things which it describes, since the mass of men are always prone to act in conformity with the assumptions which they find to be made about their motives and habits in any given milieu. If we go about, for example, saying that "every man has his price" we shall soon find plenty of people, who might otherwise never have expected to be offered a bribe, beginning to put a price upon their illicit "services".

But under the "liberal" influences of the modern period which had its rise in the "Enlightenment" purported to be spread by the eighteenth-century philosophers, it is the opposite error which has tended to exercise the greater influence. Cynicism will always be a formidable force, partly because it finds in man a perennial weakness to give colour to its estimate of him. But the right way to correct this is not to make one's assessment of political possibilities on the basis of quite unrealistic assumptions about the benevolent and altruistic nature of man. True, the "progressive", like the cynic, has something genuine to go upon; there is plenty of goodwill and an encouraging amount of selflessness in the majority under conditions which are calculated to evoke them. But, however real and widespread these impulses may be, they are spasmodic, and the degree to which we can rely upon them is limited because they are interrupted and contradicted by other impulses, to dominance, to selfishness and (not

least important) to sheer inertia. Moreover, when the optimistic calculations of the progressive are closely examined, they will generally be found to rest upon a faith less in man's moral than in his intellectual and material powers, as evidenced by and exemplified in the vast increase of his control over natural forces bequeathed to him by the achievements of the scientist. "I can do all things", said St. Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." Contemporary man is tempted to say the same, substituting the scientist for Christ. Man is seen as limited no longer by sin, but only by ignorance, and that little difficulty is being rapidly cleared up. Hence politics are increasingly expected to achieve results that previous generations had never expected of them; they become in effect a terrestrial religion.\*

Repudiation of the doctrine of Original Sin, or even the failure to recognize its existence as a fact, not only makes for an unrealistic diagnosis of political possibilities. It tends to lead to ruthlessness in political conflict and prepares the way for totalitarianism.† For since moral fallibility is no longer assumed to be in some measure universal, so that its influence will affect all policies and

\* "Political theory was never the same after it lost the safeguard—or, perhaps we may say, the ballast—afforded to it by the doctrine of the Fall. Under the older tradition the providential institution of the State had provided no cure for the sinfulness of men, but had offered a remedy for the chaos which was due to sin. But whereas this view limits the range of the good that can be achieved by political action, the secular liberals—lacking this effective brake—have tended to play too high a game in politics; especially as it would seem that all their religion becomes terrestrial, all their faith is virtually compressed into the political field." *The Englishman and his History*, by H. Butterfield (C.U.P. series on Current Problems), p. 124.

† It is, of course, true that the opposite perversion, such a pessimism about man as lay, for example, behind Nazism, leads in the same direction. For it resigns itself to, and even builds upon, the evil in man, who, nevertheless, being made in the likeness of God, is never beyond the reach of grace.



all parties, but is regarded rather as an exceptional and even monstrous sort of malice, the "liberal", his optimism thus so unfairly falsified, hates the "sin" of his opponents, "not like those who feel implicated themselves, but with the added frenzy of the partisan who has discovered here the totally unexpected obstacle". "Here is a system which releases us from self-discipline, authorizing us to treat the political enemy as sub-human, irredeemable."\* Here we have perhaps the main clue to the savagery of the political conflict which has arisen out of the doctrinaire ideologies of Right and Left lately rampant upon the Continent. The persecution to which it gives rise is not in its origin purely vengeful or sadistic; it is that most dangerous form of evil which arises from a high motive and is performed with a good conscience. Perhaps it is because of the "diffused Christianity" which has lingered longer in this country than in most other parts of Europe that we have so far avoided the worst extremes of political violence. We are the less willing to assume malice in our opponents because our Christian memory makes us reluctant to impute righteousness to ourselves. Yet it cannot be denied that the tendency to intolerance is spreading as the infection of ideologies alien to our religious and political traditions begins to be more felt. The Christian in politics has no plainer duty than that of setting an example of resistance to this tendency and refusing to be swept away by an idealism, however altruistic, into a reluctance to concede good faith to his adversaries and a generous hearing for their point of view.

We have become so justifiably tired of generalizations about "the Christian doctrine of personality" that we are

\* Butterfield, *op. cit.*, p. 125. I should be less than honest if I did not record my great debt to this little book, which, if somewhat complacent to our national shortcomings, throws much light upon the sources of our political strength.

in danger of forgetting in how many ways this truism may in fact be profoundly true. There are two, however, that are particularly relevant to our present subject. The first is that the recognition of personality imposes upon us a forbearance which is the more difficult in proportion as it seems to impede the realization of our noblest hopes. In so far as Democracy, to which we all pay lip service now, means the frank acceptance, as a political method, of controversy founded on respect for opinion and decisions sought with the maximum desire to persuade and convince, then it truly is—as we are so often told that it is—the form of government most congruous with Christianity. It is so because by these means citizens meet one another as persons, and, treating each other as such, can make even their differences co-operative in their effect. But this is not always what Democracy is taken to mean; too often—and more often to-day than was once the case—Democracy is interpreted not in terms of personality but in terms of power. Its machinery becomes a means whereby a few enthusiasts may extract the consent of the majority to policies put through with the maximum of speed and the minimum of persuasion. Truth is best discovered, said the old liberals, by following where the argument leads. But there are some among the new liberals so urgent to translate their projects into action that they are reluctant to allow the argument to begin. When some M.P.s sought the opportunity to debate some provisions of a recent Bill, they were accused by a newspaper which supported it of “throwing the country back into pre-war controversy”—as if controversy were something hostile rather than essential to the working of democratic institutions.

But if a Christian doctrine of man demands that those who engage in political controversy should treat one another with the respect and the charity which a recogni-

tion of personality should always evoke, it requires still more that those for whose welfare political projects are designed should be recognized as persons in the fullest sense. This may seem to be so essentially a democratic principle that even to mention it might appear superfluous. But to proclaim a principle and to respect it in practice are two different things, and it is an unhappy paradox that those who are most genuinely eager to improve the material and social condition of the mass of men are often those most tempted to disregard their status as free and responsible persons. A moment's consideration will show that this is not so surprising as it may seem at first sight, nor is it necessarily the result of a passion for power over the lives of others or of the mere "busybodyness" which is so common and so unhappy an accompaniment of an urge to "good works". The matter is not so simple as this, and the temptation to disregard or suppress the rights of persons—and of families—commonly arises from much more respectable motives. Some of these indeed are obvious enough. "Social" legislation generally involves dealing with people in large numbers according to general principles which can take little account of particular cases, and the abuses which it seeks to remedy are often so glaring that action has to be taken—or so it may appear—more quickly than would be possible in the time needed to persuade those affected by it that it will operate for their own, or at least for the common, good. Again, the nature of our industrial system and the character of our industrial towns for the best part of two centuries have been such as to deprive the mass of our people, if not of the power, at any rate of the will to exercise much initiative on their own behalf. There could be no more telling revelation of our civilization's implicit repudiation of the status of personality where the majority of its members have been concerned than the description of its industrial employees as



"hands". It is all too easy for those who most sincerely desire to benefit the "underprivileged" to forget that the greatest of all human privileges in the secular sphere is the privilege of being a person, and the first of all rights the right to be treated as such.

It is necessary to emphasize this because in the social activity which our post-war reconstruction will require there will be a great temptation to forget it. There is indeed an urgent need for a close Christian scrutiny of the whole field of "social service" from this point of view, for generalizations on the subject, whether they be exaltations of it as "progressive" or denunciations of it as "servile", have been far too much the product of superficial judgments, if indeed that is not too flattering a word to apply to what are often little more than the expression of lazy and hazy thinking or of a merely sectarian prejudice. Christians need to establish genuine standards of discrimination in this sphere, for until they do so they will be the victims either of such superficial habits of mind as have been stigmatized above or of assumptions which derive from doctrines and valuations which are by no means congruous with Christianity. But without prejudice to the conclusions of such a scrutiny, it is justifiable to point out that with the decay of Christianity men tend, as Professor Butterfield observes, "to make gods . . . out of their abstract nouns, which are the most treacherous and explosive things in the world".\* And to these gods reformers

\* He continues: "When human beings lost the unique place which in Christianity they held amongst all created things, and became no longer the end and purpose of the created universe, but a mere part of nature, the highest of the animals . . . then fallen as they were from the dignity of eternal souls, it was easy to think of them as not (from a terrestrial point of view) ends in themselves, but as means to an end; each of them not a whole, but a part of some higher system, some super-person, whether the *Volk* or the New Order or the deified State. . . . To this deified State all men must surrender in fact, saying solemnly: 'We are but broken lights of Thee.'" (*Op. cit.*, p. 129.)

are all too ready, with a good conscience, to sacrifice their fellows, not from mere lust for power, though we have seen this happen on the largest scale in our time, but in the purest idealism, to prove their own benevolent intentions towards them true.

What I have been attempting in this chapter is to suggest some reasons why the Christian, seeking, as is his duty, to make an impact upon the political and social issues of his time, is confronted by problems and difficulties over and above, and distinct from, those which face his contemporaries outside the Christian fold. As I have said, there is an inescapable tension in any case between the spheres of religion and politics, but there are special features in the situation which the Christian is up against to-day which, unless he is aware of them, will, whether he realizes it or not, deflect him from his true function and impair the validity of the work it is his special duty to do. What we are up against to-day is not only sin in general, man's permanent disposition to fall away from his own best ideals, nor the consequences of the alleged—and largely real—failure of the Church to fulfil its whole prophetic and restorative duty to man. We are up against certain special characteristics of this particular period in the development of civilization and the history of our own country. These characteristics are partly the product of neutral factors, the material achievements of the "power age" and the phenomena revealed by the explorations of science and the speculations which derive from them, partly the upshot of the secularization of the whole human outlook which has taken place in the last two hundred years. The "set-up" within which we have to work is one which has developed under influences among which Christianity plays a smaller part perhaps than has been the case throughout what we still know as the Christian era. Yet those influences are not wholly absent, that illumination is not altogether

extinguished. But those who seek to act in the Christian name must understand not only the demands of their religion, but the true character of the society to which, under whatever handicaps, they must strive that its social teaching shall be applied.

## THE "POLIS" AND THE CITIZEN

POLITICAL thought began with the Greeks. And in England, owing to the persistence through centuries of the influence of the classics upon the education of those who in one way or another were to direct the government of the country, the effect of that thinking has been very powerful. Its influence rests, of course, primarily upon its inherent merits; Plato and Aristotle between them, from standpoints in many ways very different, have bequeathed to succeeding ages a mine of political wisdom, the scope and quality of which will probably never be exceeded in any period of human history. But human wisdom cannot be unaffected by limitations arising from the period in which it is formulated, and there are two such limitations affecting Greek political thought that are of great significance from the standpoint of this book. One of them is immediately obvious: not only did the Greeks write several centuries before the birth of Christ, but the whole Greek intellectual outlook was totally unaffected by the biblical attitude towards life and towards man. It knew nothing of any special revelation of God to a chosen people, chosen not on their merits but to be the instrument of a Divine purpose in the world; a holy nation. Again, it can scarcely be said to have recognized the existence of sin as both the Jew and the Christian came to understand it; it was therefore "non-Messianic", cherishing no dream of a redeeming saviour. Nor had it any sure means of apprehending the truth of the spiritual equality of man; hence its assumption that slavery was a natural and even necessary institution. Moreover, whatever the gods were held to be in Greek philosophy, they bore no resemblance

to the Holy One of Jewish monotheism or the Blessed Trinity of Christian theology. It is matter for consideration how far the enormous distinction between the biblical view of life and the Greek view of the State and of man has led to that "departmental" treatment of religion and of politics which has been so marked a feature of English life, in which the Bible and the classics have each exercised so enormous an influence in the formation of the nation's mind. For these two views of life have lain alongside each other, and men have thought and acted first in terms of one and then of another. And the easiest way of doing so was to go to the Bible for guidance about man's private life and to the Greek philosophers for the illumination of his public one.

But there is another and only less important respect in which the political problem as it was seen by the Greeks differed essentially from what it has become in the modern world. For the Greeks the State was a City State. When Aristotle spoke of man as by nature a political being, he was thinking of him as exemplifying his "political" character by his capacity for living, with a greater or less degree of success, in or around a *polis*. For him, not the great nation with its large-scale problems, but the territory surrounding a city, in which men knew or could know most of their neighbours and could find the material for forming judgments on public affairs under their own eyes, was the normal and natural focus of citizenship. And after more than two thousand years of more and more ambitious political expansion, some would say that the question for us to-day is not whether in so assuming Greek thinkers were manifesting a limited understanding of the sphere of political philosophy excusable in them; the question is how far they were not relatively but absolutely right. Such a question has, of course, troubled not a few political philosophers in the modern world, but it has generally presented



itself to them purely as a problem of scale. If it is agreed that man is by nature a political animal, is his political instinct and capacity one capable of an indefinite extension? Can it be stretched to any distance without snapping? It is at least worth considering whether the answers usually given to these familiar questions have not been coloured to a somewhat dangerous degree by what we now like to describe as wishful thinking. That man can make a good show as the citizen of a *polis* does not in itself establish his capacity to make an equally good one in a metropolis; the facts indeed suggest otherwise. An ability to make some sort of effective impact upon national politics does not prove that man can yet (or ever) make a similar one upon international politics. To prove, as so many to-day are setting out to prove, that it will be very inconvenient if he does not, does not carry with it the assurance that he can. Nor do doubts about this necessarily involve a pessimistic or cynical view of the political capacity of man. I do not prove elastic to be of inferior quality because it breaks when I stretch it beyond its inherent power of extension.

But the political problem with which contemporary civilization poses us is not merely one of scale. There is a more subtle, a less easily discerned issue in the modern situation which is hardly capable of being summed up in a phrase. It is a dual problem, involving a question about the true character of politics and a question about the circumstances which condition the political competence of man as he actually is in the West to-day—the product, or at any rate the victim, of a vastly overgrown and unbalanced urbanism and industrialism. The last chapter sought to explain why contemporary man had come to look to politics for more than could possibly be achieved by this means. But it is not only a case of man expecting too much of politics; politics expect too much of man.

This is an age in which a quite unprecedented degree of political intelligence and sociological interest is being demanded of the average man and generally assumed to be, if not innate in him, at any rate easily capable of being acquired. He is exhorted to take an interest in and exercise a judgment upon a range of problems far wider and more complex than has ever been supposed to exercise the minds of ordinary people in past ages. And he is being required to do this in what are (though he is unlikely to be conscious of it) unnaturally discouraging circumstances. Politics represent an effort on the part of the human being to transcend nature, and himself as part of it. And while man may indeed be a political animal, as Aristotle declared, he is several other kinds of animal first, and if his life is disordered in the "pre-political" spheres of family and environmental and cultural life he comes to politics with certain instincts unsatisfied which in the true citizen ought to be already finding their natural outlet. It is largely because of to-day's confusion in the basic aspects of life that man so often looks to politics for more than they can ever give. He reaches politics a frustrated being; he is thrown back from them a disillusioned one. This is a dangerous condition for any community to be in, and it is the more dangerous in so far as its forms are democratic and a high degree of civic consciousness therefore exacted—or at any rate expected—from the individual. As Dr. Demant has written:

Good politics require that man must be able to count on a certain settlement in religion, culture and economics. It is also necessary that the forces in this more indeliberate part of man's life should work with and not contrary to the more conscious aims which make up politics. . . . An integrating principle for the pre-political sphere which includes family, culture, livelihood, must be found. For man cannot be a self-

conscious citizen all along the line, all the time. The alarming problem of our time is that when man is called to exercise vast political responsibility he is at the same time torn away from the pre-political basis of his life.\*

This basis was provided for in western Europe by the common assumptions and social institutions of mediæval Christendom, the influence of which extended long after the political framework which was reared upon them had decayed. But now this substructure is itself decaying under the joint impact of a scepticism about the existence of a purpose for man and the anti-human types of living imposed by industrialism and an unregulated urbanism. And as a consequence the great modern political superstructure of democracy is persistently threatened by degeneration, despite the truth which it represents and the faith which it so widely inspires.

There is a particular effect of this which has an influence upon our politics that has been very little noted. The citizen most characteristic of our contemporary "set-up" lives in a *polis* so deformed, and in an environment so abnormal, that his chances of making valid political judgments are handicapped from the start. The "worker" born in Leeds or Liverpool, the clerk wandering nomadically from one part of that cultural desert (which we may well call "Redbelt") which surrounds our metropolis, to another, almost inevitably come to accept the type of living which these agglomerations impose on them as quite natural. How is such a being to arrive at a truly civic judgment on such a basic political question, for example, as what a "balanced" national economy demands? He has no standard in experience or even in aspiration by which such a thing is to be judged. Nor is he given the leisure to acquire one. It is indeed arguable that one of the

\* Article on "The Theology of Politics" in *Christendom*, September, 1943.



most decivilizing effects operative in twentieth-century life has been caused by an effort of that century to improve in the matter of housing upon its predecessor. This has involved dispersion, but it is not sufficiently realized how grave are the social and domestic consequences of the journey to work imposed by the spacing out of those dependent for their livelihood on an occupation at the centre of our great cities. It breaks into the time and energy which all the best things in life demand, from playing with the children to talking politics in the pub—in so far as "Redbelt" allows of the existence of either. "About things on which the public thinks long", said Johnson, "it commonly attains to think right." The straphanger from the City to "Redbelt" does not commonly attain to think long about anything; he is hardly in a posture for doing so, and even if he were he does not get much chance, for the periodicals on which he relies for his information are continually changing the subject; he is the raw material of what might well be called "Gallop" polls. More and more is, in fact, being demanded of men at a period of history when the majority of them have less and less opportunity for apprehending what the essentials of normal civic living are. This is not the sort of "deficiency" that can be remedied by injections prescribed by "Book Clubs" and "literary digests". It is fair and it is consoling to realize that a good deal of more genuine political education is going on; the blackout did perhaps as much for reading as anything which has ever befallen this country, and among this reading some of the best type of social and political books are included. There are real compensations here; yet the growth of the mass-mind, with its credulity, its demand for "solutions", and its increasing intolerance of opposition and even of discussion, is not, on the whole, being overtaken by more hopeful developments.

To recall these things is not to launch an "attack upon

democracy". It is to suggest an inquiry into some of the factors that prevent democracy realizing the hopes that are founded upon it. Part of the trouble is due to the fact that those hopes are so often extravagant, not because democratic politics are necessarily a failure or a dream, but because there are limits to what any politics can achieve, and conditions essential for their successful working which are not easily attained, and which are far from being common to-day. An exaggerated faith in the power of politics to rescue mankind from its social predicaments is suggestive less of a community's vitality than of its frustration. Moreover, it is a disturbing fact that the kind of social groupings in which the political vitality of a people is best nourished are tending to wilt beneath the competition of large-scale amusement. The group of neo-anthropologists who all too significantly describe themselves as "Mass Observation" have lately pointed out\* that all the older institutions in which the remarkable social energy of the nineteenth century found expression and which gave reality to its democratic hopes are in fact declining. The "newer social drives", they say,

pools, radio, press, "motor-culture", dance halls too (to a surprising extent), cinema, do not create a social group of people consciously sharing the same experiences; the emphasis is on each individual experiencing it, not on any common feeling or interest or talk; . . . they thus tend to . . . weaken the older groupings with their definite social interests and controls; this is part of the tremendous drift away from the last centuries' samples of human effort and right away from fundamentals in Christianity, democracy and scientific research.

The question is, then, how far the most characteristic forces of our civilization, with its unregulated expansiveness going hand in hand with its increasing opportunities

\* In their volume on *The Pub and the People*. See pp. 76-9.

of concentrating in a few hands power to make an impact upon the individual, are creating conditions in which man cannot function effectively as a "political animal". The cure for this dehumanizing trend is not more politics or even a too optimistic struggle for better politics, but a more resolute confrontation of those forces which are threatening the substructure of man's communal life. No doubt this will often involve political effort to restore bit by bit the crumbling fabric of that substructure, but this will often mean less the expansion of public activity than the use of it to turn what have become public concerns back into the private concerns that in a healthy society they would be and ought to be. Our social services need to be looked at from this point of view; valuable and even necessary as an adjunct to the home and the family in a complex civilization, they cannot be a substitute for these things, as they are tending to become. The nursery school can reinforce the nursery, but if it replaces it society is not strengthened but weakened. There was a certain deep wisdom in the old maxim that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. That maxim had not only a moral and domestic but also a political reference, and we shall be right to suspect that if those who rock the cradle do so negligently, those who rule society will sooner or later be faced with intractable problems. It is relevant in this connection to recall the curious fact that in recent times those who have stood for policies which have demanded the most energy and fidelity in public affairs have often been those most indifferent to the claims of perseverance and faithfulness in personal and sexual relations.

The health of politics depends upon the health of the *polis*; its reality as a community, its relation to the vocational life of man, its capacity to create houses which can be homes and citizens who can be neighbours. That is why what is called "physical planning" is presenting itself

to an increasing number as the most urgent and significant and promising sort of planning; here politics have the biggest chance of restoring itself by restoring conditions favourable to the "pre-political" bases of social life. Ultimately, of course, the power of political action to do this will depend upon the validity of the purposes that it sets before itself and the energy with which it pursues them. From where is this insight and this perseverance to come, since there scarcely seems enough of either within politics as we now know them?

Now there are many who look to the Church to supply this deficiency. Devoted Christians, though they may have some doubts themselves as to the qualifications of the Church as they know it to-day for this rôle, are perhaps a little too apt to find this readiness to be optimistic about the social influence of religion encouraging. Up to a point and in some respects it may be so. Realization that social progress does not depend purely or even primarily on political planning, or economic expansion, but rather on a recognition of the purposes for which man and society exist in God's world, is spreading among thoughtful people and leading to a new interest in the subject with which this book deals. But not all those who are looking to the Church to supply something palpably lacking in our public life are doing so for genuinely religious reasons. And that is why society (and perhaps the Churches too, if they yield to the suggestion) may be in for a big disappointment if, or in so far as, it relies upon religion to provide a dynamic for purely secular purposes. However well developed the social conscience of the Church, it cannot get society out of any hole which it has got into by the acceptance of false or evil purposes and standards, save in so far as society is ready to repudiate those purposes and standards. Repentance, in short—a turning right round and facing another way—is a condition of salvation as

much in social as in personal concerns. But it hardly seems that repentance is quite what is in the mind of those who write letters to the newspapers to urge the "value" of religious influences in raising the morale of the nation or keeping its adolescent members out of the police courts. These people, like too many of those on the Left in contemporary politics, who are always appealing to the Church to "throw in its lot with the revolution" or "identify itself with the principle of common ownership", want religion for the sake of something they have come to value already. They do not want that something for the sake of religion. Yet, surely, if there is one conclusion which is irresistible it is that if you want religion *for* something it is no true religion that you want. The absolute cannot become the instrumental and remain itself.

This elementary consideration ought to be borne in mind when we see the rather disturbing efforts now being made to fabricate a "national Christianity". This phrase actually made its appearance in a *Times* leader not long ago, which made the curious declaration that "highly though a Church may value its own specific tenets, the value of a national Christianity as a whole is higher still. This is the real issue at stake."\* The reference was to the Education controversy, but the implications are far wider. For what are the "specific tenets" of any Church but its effort to formulate the divine truth which it believes itself to have received, and what is the value—and what is the residuum—of a national Christianity as distinct from these? In fact, of course, there is no such thing as a national Christianity; there is only Christianity. However imperfectly any particular Church—or all of them—may have understood what is demanded thereby, it will not improve the authenticity of its faith by offering it up as a contribution to the formulation of a national religion.

\* August 18, 1943.



The only terms upon which a religious body or a religious man can offer, as such, any service to the community in which they dwell, is that they should, in fact, be religious. Not a moral dynamo to run the national machine, not an ethical bellows to pump altruism into social service, but a prophetic force operating upon society with sanctions which come from beyond society—such is true religion.

The challenge of our age to such a force is a great one. We see in many emanations of democracy to-day, despite its valid basis and its noble ideals, a disregard of the responsibility of the person, of the autonomy of the family, of respect for human variety and of charity towards and tolerance for opposing opinion. But these, if not specifically Christian values, are values which will be in danger of submergence if the Church is not in the field to defend them. In a society of ever-increasing pressure towards mass hypnotism, quantitative standards and the mobilization of man for power, the Church must do its work not by submergence in social movements, nor, of course, in indifference to them, but certainly in independence of them. Only thus can it lead—as it ought to lead—the battle for discrimination, elucidation, insistence on a right relation of social activities to one another, and the rescue from oblivion of causes with no worldly interests to back them.

The Church will serve society, however, less by deliberately setting out to do so than by studying how to be faithful to the whole truth it has received. It is not the purpose of the Church to provide either social stability or economic prosperity for their own sake; the Church is concerned primarily with persons, and is not concerned with teaching them how to lay up treasure upon earth. As Professor Brogan has caustically observed: "it might be necessary, if Christianity really took, for the sponsors of



revival to see that it did not take too well."\* There is not much danger of that at present, but there is a danger that if we demand of religion that it provide us with what it is not its business to give us, we may divert it from that service to man and to society which it alone has the power to offer.

\* *The English People*, p. 137.

## THE CHURCH'S CLAIM IN POLITICS

ONE of the surest signs that what we call the social order is not in any true sense an order is seen when there is a confusion, whether in men's minds or in actual life, between organs or functions within it that exist, if not actually for different, at least for quite distinct purposes. It is characteristic of the contemporary muddle, for example, that employment should have come to be looked upon not primarily from an economic point of view at all: not, that is, as essentially the means whereby the members of a community supply each other's needs. Rather is it thought of and written about and planned for primarily as a means of somehow distributing enough money to enable people to support themselves or enough occupation to keep them out of mischief. Certainly the vast majority of men like to feel that they are "earning their keep" and are unhappy when they are left without an occupation, but these things ought to and would arise naturally out of the sensible organization of a free society which was pursuing valid and realistic objectives and was not enslaved to abstractions. But if we start to "plan" our industry in the effort to make it serve not industrial but political or social purposes, we shall lose sight of the objects for which man's activity as a worker exists—or ought to exist—and leave ourselves with no standards by which to judge how far any particular work is worth doing on its merits. For once employment ceases to be regarded as a means and begins to be accepted as an end, people are tempted to value jobs not for the "goods" they produce or for the satisfaction that production affords, but solely by the extent to which they "give employment". And that is an inversion of true order.

Here we have a confusion between economic and social organization to the detriment of both. We have already in this book seen how easily confusion arises between the nature and function of religion and politics. In our first chapter it was pointed out how the decay of belief in original sin led naturally to an intolerance which revealed that politics was being regarded in effect as a "terrestrial religion". The claims appropriate to a belief founded upon convictions about the supernatural were reproduced in a sphere involving the natural, where they were wholly out of place. I do not mean, of course, that intolerance or fanaticism is justifiable in any sphere, or excusable when manifested in the name of religion; I mean that an attitude towards truth which we believe to be revealed to us by God, and to concern man's immortal destiny, ought to create in us a different type of loyalty and a different quality of emotion from our beliefs about man as the member of an earthly community. In the light of this we can see that there are some to-day who confuse religion and politics by making politics too religious, just as we saw at the end of the last chapter that there are some who confuse them by making religion too political—by trying, that is, to make a supernatural claim instrumental to a human purpose which is really (even if unconsciously) regarded as more important. The fact that the great majority of people who fall into these errors are perfectly honest enthusiasts who are prompted by no unscrupulous motives only makes these mistakes all the more dangerous. Christian people have always to beware that in "bringing their religion into their politics", which in the true sense it is their bounden duty to do, they are not turning their religion into politics, which is, in fact, what we do when we identify the eternal ordinances of God with the particular secular politics which happen most to appeal to us.

But too many people in the past and not a few to-day

have argued—or more often simply assumed—that because religion ought not to be confused with politics, religion ought to have no contact with politics, except in so far as a man may be a better politician to the degree that he is a good Christian man. Now whether this view is held in good faith or, as has been too often the case, because it can be a conveniently selfish or a conveniently lazy view to hold, it is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of Christianity and the rôle of the Church, and whenever it has become widespread its effects have been disastrous, both for religion and for society. It is highly significant that it was just when religion was at its nadir in this country that this view was most widely accepted, and philosophers were actually allowed to lay it down, without a word of challenge from Christian teachers, that man, if left to himself, could work out his own social salvation and could be trusted to do so by consulting exclusively his individual interests. "A Clergyman", writing a tract\* for the S.P.C.K. only ninety years ago, said this in so many words: "through the wise and beneficent arrangements of Providence men do their greatest service to the public when they are thinking of nothing but their own gain." Pope had, in effect, seemed to be saying the same thing more than a century before in his *Essay on Man*; nature, he declared, bade "true self-love and social be the same." Whether the poet would have agreed with the clergyman that "true self-love" was exemplified by thinking of nothing but one's own gain is perhaps open to argument. But this view of man had in the meantime passed from the custody of poetry into the chilly hands of the new priesthood, those who spoke with the mounting authority of Economic

\* *The Temporal Benefits of Christianity explained*. This quotation helps us to understand what F. D. Maurice meant when he spoke, just at this time, of "the dense commercial strength which one encountered even in religion as a more overpowering nightmare upon the soul than any bad influence felt".

Science. The tragedy was that nineteenth-century religion took the world's "science" at its face value in economics, a sphere of life in regard to which, as guardian of the truth about man, it had not only a standing but a heavy responsibility, while recklessly challenging it in the realms of geology and biology, where it had neither the one nor the other. It was upon a false and socially destructive assumption about the economic duty of man that the Industrial Revolution was launched, perhaps the most devastating revolution in human history. And a Church ignorant not only of its social traditions but of the plainest implications of its theology showed scarcely a glimmer of understanding of what was going on.

No wonder that the initiative thus surrendered is only to be recovered with so much difficulty, and that theology, which was once accepted as *regina scientiarum*, is now widely regarded as an academic hobby for specialists with no practical implications. Yet that initiative has got to be recovered if man is not to blunder out of one social heresy into another, as he has been doing with such catastrophic results in our own time. The experiences of the last twenty-five years have shattered for most people all belief in society as a self-righting mechanism. We realize now that if it is to work right it must be put right and kept right. Hence all the talk we now hear about "Planning", but hence also a very widespread anxiety, crystallized in the cry of one of our leading sociologists, "Who will plan the Planners?" And, of course, there is only one answer to this, an answer which in an age in which religion was seen for what it truly is would be obvious. The primary claim of the Church in relation to secular affairs is a claim to inform or to remind society, and in particular those who exercise authority within it, of what man is, and to make clear what is at stake in the political organization of the community. For what really matters is not what men, at any



given moment, may mistake for their own convenience or advantage, but the permanent truth about them—the truth about their needs, about their rights, about their duties and about their limitations as creatures, and creatures moreover in a world invaded by sin. When it scrutinizes all political and social policy from this standpoint, the Church is not “interfering in politics”; it is giving to politics that leadership which it is the Church’s business to give; a leadership to which many who are in no sense Church-people have been showing themselves more and more ready to listen, and of which they have sometimes even complained that they have not been offered enough. For it is being slowly realized that the Christian claim to speak about the purposes explicit or implicit in the political and social policies of the community involves no intrusion upon the legitimate function of the statesman. Dr. Temple went to the heart of the matter when he said: “It is the duty of Lambeth to remind Westminster of its responsibility to God, but this does not mean that Westminster is responsible to Lambeth.” Christian doctrine affords no justification for theocracy, and the Church’s social teaching bars it as much as any other institution from advancing any totalitarian claim.

Nevertheless, for quite creditable, even if mistaken, reasons, people have often been suspicious of what they have felt to be the “interference” of the Church or of its leaders in public affairs. Some have been afraid of Churchmen intruding into spheres which were not their business, the affairs of which they were not trained to understand. This suspicion was cleverly illustrated lately when after Dr. Temple had had some searching remarks to make about the function of finance in the economic life of the community, one of the papers published a cartoon showing a City man exclaiming to another: “I wonder how the Archbishop would like it if you and I went round



christening people?" No doubt this did represent what some people in the City felt about those observations of the Primate: an impression that their legitimate functions were being invaded. What they, and others like them elsewhere, failed to see was that money is not something the manipulation of which can be isolated and dealt with according to purely financial conventions. The issue and the control of money has to be related to the purposes for which a community truly exists, and to see that it is so related is in fact a concern of religion. Once that relationship is rightly established, and so long as it is maintained, the Church's responsibility ends, and the Churchman, as such, has no more justification for concerning himself with what goes on in the bank parlour than the banker would have in inquiring into what may happen in the vestry.

A similar problem arises in a wider connection in regard to the whole question of "Planning". It is in fact even more apt to prove confusing here because the word "planning" is used to describe two distinct—or at any rate distinguishable—things; at one moment it is used in regard to schemes for the better arrangement of the means by which men live and labour and carry on their social affairs, at another of proposals which affect the whole context of domestic and personal life. The planning of the transport industry, for example, may be a matter of great social and economic significance for vast numbers of people and very different types of interest, but it is essentially a secular problem, in which Churchpeople may well be closely concerned as citizens or as workers, but on which their religious profession gives them no special right or obligation to express themselves. But when we come to plans for rehousing our people in the post-war era, to take another example, the position is very different. While the technical aspect of the matter is very important, and political issues may enter in, these are not all that is involved. In de-

cisions which communities and individuals may arrive at in regard to housing and local planning, very much indeed will depend on what importance men attach to provision for family life. And here is a matter upon which the Church must have—and we may be sure will have—a great deal to say. And this is not merely because Church-people are interested in the provision of well-built houses, sanitary, well sited and good to look upon, as we may suppose every good citizen to be. Beyond all this the Church has a vital interest in the place of the family in the whole social order, and a special realization of how houses not designed to make a healthy family life easy or even possible must thwart and deform the lives of men and women and make it unnaturally difficult for them to understand their status before God as free and responsible persons. This is but one example of how the Church may be, and ought to be, brought right into politics, and perhaps even into political controversy, not merely to reinforce some demand which all good men will naturally make, but to affirm and vindicate something about the life of man and his needs to which those who do not share the Christian outlook may attach much less importance, or which they may perhaps actually reject.

The question of the Church's action is often presented as if it must commonly involve it in "taking sides" with one political outlook, or even one political party, or another. It might indeed happen that some great moral issue might crystallize itself along such lines; if it did so, and just in so far as it did so, the Church might well be morally obliged to come down on one side, even at the risk of confusion with the alignments of secular politics. But, in fact, this situation is not very likely to arise in contemporary politics, not only for the reason that most political issues are of such a nature that Christians may legitimately differ on them, but because even where moral issues may

be implicated they are very unlikely to be correctly defined. Since society in its present form is only very remotely the product of Christian influences, its understanding of man and its valuations of social purpose are often so deficient that either controversy is not really concerned with the essential points of any given problem, or else one side has got hold of a part of the truth and the other of another, so that outright support of either, while it may be a practical necessity from a secular point of view, can hardly demand an outright moral judgment from the side of religion. So much of our social legislation is plainly patchwork, the attempt of a harassed political authority to prevent an irrational economic system from working out to its logical but disastrous conclusions, that it is rather the business of religion to point out where false objectives are being taken for granted than to busy itself with the details of policies which involve so much evasion of social truth and economic reality.

An example of the moral and intellectual confusion of our politics may be found in the controversy that rages round the question of how far and in what ways the direct responsibility of the State for the welfare of the majority of its citizens ought to be exercised or enlarged. One party to this controversy stresses the importance of personal liberty and responsibility; the other emphasizes the need for society so to organize matters that its less fortunate members are not left to be the victims of insecurity and the want, disease and squalor which go with it. Both parties are affirming something that is extremely important, but both are much too much inclined to take the whole economic, industrial and technocratic set-up as they find it, without inquiring whether society's attitude to monetary policy, the balance of urban and rural economy, mass-production and the use of machinery, enables it to choose the sort of life in which men and families could

enjoy responsibility and security at the same time. In fact, it is surely obvious that many of the powers and the functions which have accrued to the State in recent decades, whether we regard these as beneficent or sinister in their operation, have done so less as the upshot of any coherent philosophy or deliberate policy than as a more or less inevitable consequence of the failure of the natural associations of the community to function spontaneously, as they should in a healthy and natural order. State action is, indeed, less an embodiment of community consciousness than an instinctive effort of society to prevent social disintegration. The most striking feature of social development in the last hundred years has been the way in which the State has taken over functions once the province of other social units, whether the family, the Church, the industrial association or the spontaneous social grouping. The most essentially personal things—motherhood, health, education and the assurance of a livelihood—are becoming for the majority more and more public things, and this is increasingly accepted as quite natural. The supervision of other people's lives is even becoming a specialized profession of almost unlimited scope. "Professional social workers", said Mrs. Montagu Norman to a recent conference of these people, "belong to one of the finest professions in the world, which, owing to the foresight of Sir William Beveridge, *might be one of the largest.*" That abnormal situations should demand abnormal remedies is understandable, and that the social and economic pressures of an over-urbanized and over-industrialized civilization should have led to a state of things in which a majority of families should be assumed to need expert assistance, day in, day out, in the management of their homes and of their children and of their communal relationships, is so familiar to us that its essential abnormality is not perhaps so obvious as it ought to be. But that such

expert advisers and supervisors should be encouraged to regard their vocation not merely as a normal one, but as one to be expanded into "one of the largest" occupations in the country, is an extraordinary revelation of how far our society is failing to function as a natural order.

This passing over of initiative and responsibility from individuals and families to the hands of public bodies is commonly justified on one or both of two grounds. In the first place it is held to exemplify a salutary extension of the social conscience and of a communal awareness. And of course there is something in this claim, though very few take any pains to distinguish between those "social services" which represent a deliberate and perhaps a valid attempt to organize communally what all members of the community equally require, and those which are fabricated from an imagined—and perhaps a real—necessity of dealing with the consequences of a disintegrating society as these affect its less fortunate members. This is a very important distinction, however, which would need to be borne in mind by any who might take in hand such scrutiny of our social legislation as has already been suggested to be desirable. It is at least arguable that the extension of state activities has very considerably outrun the development of public consciousness, and in so far as this happens the agents of such activities, commonly stigmatized as "bureaucrats", do not appear to those affected by their operations as fulfilling any aspirations of their own, but seem rather to be intruders from an alien world. Moreover, it is much too generally assumed by those who accept the ever wider extension of social organization as desirable, or at any rate inevitable, that for all practical purposes the community is to be identified with the State. The increasing tendency to suppose that it is the destiny of voluntary social agencies to be absorbed into governmental ones, on the ground that efficiency is

to be attained only by such a transformation, is one that calls for a great deal more questioning than it has received.

The second justification for the increase of public authority over what were long regarded as private matters is sought in the growing complexity of our social system. But this begs the question—too large a one to examine here—of how far this complexity is not in itself a sign of social maladjustment. Both these apologies for the multiplication of public powers, however, should lead Christians to ask how far the teaching of the Church about the liberty of the Person and the Family is in danger of being infringed by those who are often most sincerely concerned for the welfare of both. And there arises the further question whether Christian social teaching does not reject the whole secular quarrel between the State and the Individual as a false one, and demand that man's many-sidedness be reflected in what may perhaps best be described as an "associative" society. The "totalitarian" tendency, a tendency by no means incompatible with the maintenance of "democratic" forms, is not anti-Christian only in so far as it is directed towards evil ends. It is so in itself, because it drains away from persons and spontaneous social groupings the responsibilities which men must bear if they are to function as the moral beings which God created them to be. The individual does not exist for the purposes of the State, though of course he owes duties to the community which it is sometimes the legitimate function of the State to define. Nor does the State exist merely to enable men to "realize themselves" as individuals. God made man a social being (which is very much what Aristotle meant in his phrase commonly translated as "a political animal"), and it is only in finding the true ways of being such that he can be fully man. But this "associative" quality is best expressed by the development of a complex of social groupings with an inherent life



of their own, which is neither in theory nor practice—as their history will often reveal—derived from the State. Not only will such associations tend to call forth the positive energies of their members, and provide the chance for differing types of people to function as social persons, but society will be better served to the extent that such corporate bodies can be made directly responsible for the activities they undertake. It is no accident that the social structure of the period that we know as the “ages of faith” was characterized neither by centralized power nor by what we know as “individualism”, but was a *communitas communitatum*, a complex of spontaneous and responsible corporations.

Let it not be supposed that this question of developing a social structure calculated to elicit responsibility and positive will is an academic matter. There is indeed only too much danger of the “mass man”, into which the contemporary citizen all too easily degenerates under the pressures to which our unnatural civilization subjects him, shunning what Mr. T. S. Eliot has called “the responsibility and strain of being human”. An often-quoted dictum of G. K. Chesterton declared that Christianity, without attacking slavery directly, “produced a climate in which the slave could not grow”. Conversely, the modern situation, arising in large measure out of a repudiation of Christianity, has produced a climate in which the free and responsible moral being finds it unnaturally difficult to grow. Deterministic influences sweep down upon man to-day from every side. Psychology, as it is popularly communicated to him, leaves him with the impression that even the faults of which he is aware are the product of “complexes” for which he cannot be held responsible, and in a dangerous half-truth suggests that it is not sin which causes any sense of guilt which he may experience, but rather a sense of guilt which leads him into evil or (as they

are more often described) "anti-social" ways. Biology is called in to reinforce the sense of moral irresponsibility, the undoubted truth that men's disposition is influenced by the endocrine glands being interpreted to hint that the individual is a helpless victim of his physical make-up.\* This impression of being the subject of influences beyond all hope of individual, or even social, control is strengthened for the majority by the vast and impersonal scale of modern power production, where the worker's rôle is too often that of "feeding" a machine and doing so at the pace which the conveyor-belt or the assembly line prescribes. And then suddenly, under the influence of distant and mysterious forces, the machine stops, and those accustomed to gain their livelihood by tending it are exposed to an "economic blizzard" as uncontrollable apparently as the weather from which the metaphor is borrowed. The man who takes for granted some natural rhythm of life, as for example the peasant, may be too much circumscribed by the limitations of his experience, but he is not (like the industrial employee, turned overnight into an "unemployed"), dehumanized and he is not unnerved. He contributes to but a simple process perhaps, but it is a process the greater part of which he can see fulfilling itself before his eyes and the whole of which he can understand; he is not at the mercy of a system which nobody seems to understand. And as the upshot of these mysterious deadlocks come those social and international frustrations to resolve which there appears to be no way but the "inevitable" war. And that war, once begun, cannot be

\* In a recent revue song a young woman, confessing to various misdemeanours, excused each admission with the refrain: "I really cannot help it, it's my glands." While the intention was satiric, one's pleasure in hearing this sort of "science" guyed was qualified by the suspicion that a good many of the audience would not have been above advancing a similar apologia on behalf of themselves should circumstances have suggested it.

quarantined like a plague or ringed round like a prairie fire; it sucks first one unwilling nation and then another into its dreadful vortex, and rains death and destruction upon men, women and children who have no more capacity to understand why this has come upon them or power to forestall it than the dumb animals which often share their fate.

This deterministic character in which modern life presents itself to so many has had grave effects on the political mood of our time and may have still graver ones. In some cases, and those perhaps among the more reflective of those affected by it, it has gone far to confirm that most secret and terrible suspicion which lurks at the back of the contemporary mind, that has "outgrown" not only religion but the rationalist optimism which claimed to supersede it, the suspicion that life after all is meaningless, that man's problems are insoluble, and that every increase in his knowledge and his power only goes to make them worse. But in less reflective minds the effect, if less disturbing, is still more unrealistic; men cling to the hope that all things may be done *for* them (whether by benevolent bureaucrats, scientific "experts" or some such impersonal force as progress or the "logic of history"), but do not seriously consider how far anything can or will have to be done *by* them. In so far as such moods, whether of despair or passivity, are the product of mistaken social goals and "priorities" it is part of the essentially religious mission of the Church to make clear how this is so, and how a politics which sets before men valid objectives may recover its initiative over "the trend of events". If religion must remind man that he is a sinner, it has even before this to convince him that he is not a robot; not an "orphan of the storm" but a child of God. It is not for the Church to "interfere in politics", but it is for it to interfere in that process of social disintegration in which politics have

been reduced to an impossible attempt to catch up with and to repair the consequences of power sought at the expense of true order and quantity at the expense of value. A Church aware at once of its own doctrines of man and society and of the nature of the human plight to-day would know how to restore Politics to Man and Man to Politics.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S RÔLE IN POLITICS

THE matters so far dealt with in this book do not, of course, for the most part represent what the average man to-day thinks of as Politics at all. For him politics are concerned with the day-to-day tussles between this group of politicians and that, between this interest and that, between advocates of one proposal for organizing our industrialized society and another. And in regard to politics conducted on this level there are three questions that commonly trouble Christian people. First of all, have they anything to do with them, *as Christians*, at all? Is it not all a rough-and-tumble sort of business with which religion can have no very direct connection? Or if, nevertheless, Christianity can be seen to have a relation to current politics that Christians cannot disavow, although the controversies into which the obligation carries them seem often so far below the level of Christian truth and Christian practice, how is it that the most sincere and the most thoughtful Christian people find themselves divided in their political allegiance? And, finally, if it is inevitable, perhaps justifiable, perhaps even salutary, that they should be so divided, are such divisions to be accepted as valid and absolute over the whole field of politics, or are there any purposes for which Christians ought to unite in politics, and if so what means can they find to do so? It is on these questions that this chapter will attempt to throw some light.

It is easy to say that it is a moral duty for the Christian to accept his obligations as a citizen, and do his best to fulfil them in national and local politics. In a traditionally Christian country like ours, where the objects that the



community seeks are at any rate supposed to be in harmony with a Christian valuation of life, and where the State makes no overt demands upon its citizen that conflict with a profession of the Faith, no one is likely to dispute this proposition in principle, though some Christians may be rather slack or rather bewildered about carrying it into practice. It is of the essence of Christian political principle that the temporal sphere is "ordained of God", and in so far as democracy is a reality all men have in some degree a duty to fulfil in it. But, while this duty exists for all men, it challenges Christians in a particular way, for, while they cannot employ their religious preoccupations as an alibi to excuse them from political obligations,\* equally they cannot cease to act as Christians because they are also acting as citizens. "The Christian", says M. Maritain, "should not absent himself from any field of human action; he is needed everywhere." He is called to activity in politics not only by nature but by grace.

The justice of the Gospel and the life of Christ within us want the whole of us, to take complete possession of us, in the secular as well as in the spiritual order. Action is an epiphany of being. If grace takes hold of us and remakes us in the depth of our being, it is that all our actions should feel its effects and be illuminated by it.†

\* Except perhaps in the case of "religious", or of some of them, who may legitimately in this, as in other respects, make a special "renunciation" of the world which would not be justified in the case of Christians not under vows.

† *True Humanism*, p. 290. In no book have the problems of Christian participation in politics been more carefully analysed than in this. See especially Chapter VIII and the Appendix. M. Maritain wrote with particular reference to conditions obtaining on the Continent, which have always been different in several important respects from those which have contributed to make up the situation here; moreover, his book was written in 1936, since when large changes have taken place in the spiritual and political configuration of Europe. Nevertheless, much of M. Maritain's discussion is of enduring value in regard to the problems dealt with in this chapter.



All this is true, it is even elementary; but it does not dispose of the questions which Christian participation in the affairs of what is so largely a post-Christian society necessarily raises. For just because religion has lost so much of its influence over the minds of those who claim to direct—while in fact they too often only swim with—the currents of the modern world, the political issues of to-day have largely lost contact with essential realities. It is just because many feel this to be true, without perhaps precisely understanding why or how it has come to be true, that we find so much of that “apathy” about contemporary politics which is a cause of so much indignation and perplexity to politicians, who cannot understand why anyone should find any difficulty in taking them as seriously as they take themselves. That there is something missing in our politics to-day is intuitively felt by many who would be hard put to it to define just what it fundamentally is, though they might be ready enough to quote this or that example as a consequence of it. Yet the nature of this lack ought to be no matter for perplexity to the Christian if he is alive to the essential failure in this sphere alike of the Church and the world. It is, of course, the loss of a clear conviction of what society ought to be aiming at.

The chief political need of our time is for such a conception of the truth of man's nature and destiny, such a grasp of the divinely intended purpose of human life, as will give direction, certainty and vigour to our search for the political means to implement man's nature and serve God's purpose in this world. And while mere politics cannot satisfy this need, political discussion will remain uncertain, muddled and befogged until the need is satisfied. . . .

There must be a dogma of human purpose before there can be a rational discussion about the means of attaining that purpose, *and politics are concerned with the means*. Our trouble to-day is that we have no such

agreed philosophy of life. That was the basic reason for the political bewilderment, the decline of political intelligence, and the growing disrepute of politics in the period between the two wars.\*

That the Church must bear a large share of blame for the development of such a state of things does not make the problem of Christian participation in politics as they are to-day any the less complex. But this problem is only part of the wider one of how Christians are to live and act in a "post-Christian" world, and this is not a problem that can be solved by the evasion of its difficulties. Every period of history has its special obstacles and challenges to offer to the Christian, arising from that "tension" between the Church and the world which was discussed in the opening chapter of this book. It is for him to show his intelligence by discerning and his fidelity by confronting them.

Since the Church does not direct, and for at least four centuries scarcely attempted or even claimed to direct, the purposes of society, the Christian at any rate should not be surprised to find its objectives confused and its political alignments largely unreal. Since this is so, the *first* duty of Christian groups and individuals in politics will not be to look out optimistically for the "right" party or movement and rush to "lend" it Christian support. Their initial (though not of course their only) duty as religious people is to be religious—*i.e.*, to estimate first the validity of the ends at which all parties and movements are aiming, and then the morality of the means by which they seek to attain them. This will involve a considerably higher level

\* W. G. Peck, *Christians, Politics and Parties* (I.C.F. pamphlet), p. 8. Cf. J. H. Oldham: "The real source of many of our difficulties is the absence of a social and political philosophy which, while avowedly secular, is at least not incompatible with the Christian understanding of the ends of man's earthly life, and which is open to progressive impregnation and leavening with Christian insights and values." Letter in *Theology*, September, 1944, p. 208.

of consecrated intelligence and awareness than that at which the average churchgoer has ever been trained, or even counselled, to aim. Christian people as a whole have no right to complain of their difficulties in fulfilling their duty in the political sphere until they have put themselves to a good deal more pains than most of them have so far done to qualify themselves for performing it.

But beyond this, and as things are, perhaps more immediate is the problem of political action in the narrower, more popular sense. Christian people are often disappointed to find that not merely a common profession of faith, but even prolonged and single-minded study together still leaves important divergences of outlook between them where political questions are concerned. It troubles some of them that Christians should be found in different parties and on opposite sides of political controversies that appear to raise moral issues. This distress is primarily due to a failure to understand the implications of what is described by Christian political philosophers as "the autonomy of the secular". This phrase does *not* mean that religious considerations have no relation to temporal affairs or that political morality ought to be exempt from Christian scrutiny; the autonomy in question is, as Dr. Oldham has put it, "in respect of the Church as ecclesiastical institution but not in respect of God and his revealed will". Man exists on two planes of being, the eternal and the temporal, and while the second is incomparably the less important, it is not, while he is alive upon this earth, the less real or the less valid. The final chapter of this book will attempt to show that the Christian should act, even in the temporal sphere, in the light of the theological virtues and not only of the "cardinal" ones. His mood and his attitude in day-to-day affairs, including those which are included within the range of politics, will be—or should be—different from those of his fellow-men

who are not of his faith, because his ultimate allegiance is to a kingdom that is not of this world. But his Christian profession will not of itself guarantee him any unique insight into problems that do not relate to man's eternal destiny but to the organization of his earthly affairs, nor will it eliminate differences that arise from varieties of temperament, experience and political preference. As M. Maritain has well expressed it:

It would be to confuse the spiritual and the temporal spheres to imagine that the common doctrine of the Church suffices in itself to resolve the conflicts of temporal history and to bring those temporal and concretely determined solutions which men have need of here and now.\*

When we have rendered to God what is God's—and this does *not* mean worship only, but a full and honest acknowledgment of his laws for society so far as we are able to learn of them from that Natural Law which it has always been a main purpose of the Church to acknowledge and to discern—then we have to “render to Cæsar” (*i.e.*, in the sphere of political activity) the best service that we can. But here not only are intellectual, temperamental and even hereditary differences between men inevitable, not only are they legitimate, but they are actually salutary. For it is out of the discussions and controversies to which they give rise that men, if they are single-minded in the pursuit of it, attain to such truth as they are capable of in the understanding of earthly affairs. For men are at once finite and responsible. Their limitations will prevent any one of them from seeing the whole of the truth on any subject; their reason requires them to share in the struggle to perceive it. The justification for the democratic method of government is not to be sought for in any consecration of the will-to-power of majorities; it depends upon the

\* *True Humanism*, p. 264.

degree of its capacity to evoke that contributory energy of mind and spirit which is proper to man as a responsible being. Moreover, we may surely suspect that God intends not only man's domestic life but also his political associations to have value for him as a moral discipline, and the give and take which we learn to practise first in the family we must be ready to acknowledge as no less a good thing for us in the conduct of public affairs.

Differences between Christians on political questions are therefore not merely something to which we have to resign ourselves; they may even be regarded as implicit in that moral and intellectual training by which our life here on earth prepares us for a life beyond. But while it is important to realize the validity of such differences, it is at least equally important to emphasize two considerations in qualification of this truth. First, the fact that while Christians are justified in taking whatever share in secular movements and political parties their convictions and their opportunities may lead them to take, this does not destroy the probability that, precisely because they are Christians, they will find considerable difficulties in doing so without treachery to their spiritual obligations. Secondly, while Christians may legitimately differ in politics, it is no less true, and perhaps more importantly so, that there are certain spheres in which they should expect and seek to agree. If they are to do this, they must in the first place be clear about what these spheres are, and, secondly, make some provision, such as scarcely exists to-day, by which such agreement may issue out in common action. The problems that arise out of these considerations have received very little attention from Christian writers and teachers, and it is therefore proposed to deal with them at some length here.

The rôle of the public-spirited Christian citizen, aware of the distortions to which, for reasons already indicated,



politics are subject in our "post-Christian" society, is not an easy one. If he is so conscious of the unreality of political alignments and sociological controversies that he feels bound to detach himself from the ties of parties or established "schools of thought", or to offer only a very limited allegiance to them, then he will not unnaturally be suspect as either a crank or a faintheart, and forfeit opportunity of place and influence in public affairs.\* If, however, he suppresses these scruples or is less moved by them than by a single-minded desire to do his best in the situation with which history has presented him, difficulties of a more positive kind are likely to confront him. For by throwing himself unreservedly into political causes and parties he will find himself exposed to one or all of three challenges that arise from a sub-Christian, or even directly anti-Christian, outlook on politics.

In the first place, Christians engaging in political activity must expect to find it constantly taken for granted that they will act on assumptions which they cannot—or ought not to—accept. These assumptions may not be flagrantly cynical or unscrupulous; they may be merely crystallizations of a public opinion formed without any reference to a Christian view of life. Examples of such assumptions are the idea that political methods can be, and even ought to be, exempt from scrutiny from a moral standpoint; that the "economic man" whose existence has

\* It is important to realize that both conscientiousness and intelligence *may* be exemplified in the political sphere by abstention from political activities as well as by participation in them. While political apathy that results from intellectual lethargy may well be sinful, "non-co-operation" may arise in particular instances not from indifference but from awareness. Where the Christian is convinced of the irrelevance or the fallaciousness of all the policies between which he is invited to choose, he may justifiably feel an obligation to reject all of them. In such cases, however, he will do well to make as plain as possible to any who will attend to him what are his reasons for coming to this conclusion.



been postulated by many "scientific" exponents of this subject is both a real and a valid being; and that the demands of the "mass man", created and conditioned by a secularized industrialism, are a sufficient justification for the production of inferior goods or the provision of demoralizing—or at any rate devitalizing—types of entertainment. (This is often defended as "giving the public what it wants" and declared to be a logical consequence of "democracy".) Secondly, Christians must be alive to the difficulties that arise from the fact that natural and legitimate differences of political philosophy, as for instance those that stress the value of Order and Tradition on the one hand and of Liberty and Progress on the other, are to-day, whether unconsciously or unscrupulously, criss-crossed and exploited by all sorts of self-regarding interests and "pressure groups" that make political philosophies their stalking horses. Thirdly, Christians must face what is at the least a very strong possibility, that they will find the working of the political "machine" most effective just in proportion as it rejects the type of political leadership that it is their duty to demand and where possible to give. Respect for personality and insistence upon human responsibility must lead the Christian to require methods of propaganda and controversy that evoke as high a degree as possible of individual judgment and fairmindedness, that eschew all efforts at mass hypnotism, and reject appeals to self-interest at the expense of the public good. He is likely to be told, however, that these are not the methods that get results, that the "other side" cannot be relied upon to use them, and that "the cause" will be prejudiced if too much scrupulousness is demanded in the prosecution of it.

These difficulties have not been cited in any effort to suggest that they make the task of the Christian in the rough and tumble of politics an impossible one. On the

contrary, it may well be argued that it is in proportion as the influence of conscientious and intelligent Christian people increases in the political sphere that the battle against its evils will be effectively sustained. The point is that the Christian will be safe from the corruptions of politics only if he is aware of them and realizes the dangers amid which he must walk. He must expect, of course, to encounter more personal temptations too, temptations to ambition, self-seeking and the snares that wait upon all exercise of influence and power. These dangers are inseparable from the control of human affairs; to run away from them is to run away from life. But it is fatally easy for the Christian to forget or to blur the fact that even when he is acting in a purely secular sphere, and within the limitations that co-operation with others who do not share his faith imposes, he never ceases to be bound by the standards implicit in his baptismal vows. If he does remember this, then his influence may be of great significance and effect, and especially just at this time. For the relatively fluid political situation of the moment creates special opportunities for those as disinterested as all Christians ought to be and as politically well educated as they should try to be—opportunities to re-define, to clarify and to purify the aims and policies of the party or movement to which their convictions have led them to adhere. It is our Christian responsibility to set an example of freedom from inherited or emotional prejudice, stale and secondhand thinking, and merely selfish aims, and to induce as many of those who work alongside of us in political affairs to do the same.

In these days when there exist highly developed techniques for making mass attacks upon the public mind and overturning rational judgment, there is great need for Christians to insist upon the moral obligation to preserve the opportunity for forming responsible opinion. It is,

more over, a religious duty to fight against that invasion of intolerance and the totalitarian outlook from which even democracies are not free. These developments are all the more dangerous when they are enlisted, as there seems some prospect that they will be in this country, in the interests of altruistic causes. In proportion as emotion—and perhaps especially generous emotion—enters into political antagonisms, the peril increases. It was precisely the idealism of such men as Robespierre and Dzerjinsky that turned them into the arch-terrorists which they became. The more convinced a man becomes of the truth and importance of a proposition for the reform of society, the more difficult will it normally be for him to believe that those who oppose him are thinking honestly or acting in good faith. Yet it will be no use our proclaiming ourselves to be democrats if we abandon the very foundations upon which democracy must rest if it is to be valid—respect for minorities, tolerance of opposition, and the assumption of good faith in those who oppose us. There are grave signs to-day of a decay in these foundations, yet in proportion as they weaken will our nominally democratic institutions degenerate into that tyranny of the majority which is the corruption to which all forms of popular government are subject, and not least when they become the machine of enthusiastic idealists. Intolerance is commonly the product of that spirit of self-righteousness which can be as disastrous to those who fall a victim to it in politics as it is in matters of religion, and Christians, just because their initial inspiration is often noble and disinterested, have an especial need to be on their guard against it.

What has so far been contended is that Christians need feel no distress at finding themselves on different sides in political controversy, so long as they are careful to be sure that they are thinking and acting in all things primarily as

Christians. But since, as has been suggested, the problem of acting as a Christian when co-operating with others for secular causes is not a simple one, even in theory, there is much to be said for Christian people, whose vocation or whose interests lead them to take any considerable share in public affairs, but who may differ from one another about them, seeking opportunities for consultation on the difficulties that may confront them all equally. This is one respect in which Christian differences on politics need to be balanced by efforts towards co-operation, but of course there are even more important grounds for such co-operation than this. These arise from the fact that while some matters can be plainly seen to belong to the spiritual sphere and others to the temporal, there is a sphere intermediate between those where religion and politics overlap, and it is high time that Christians realized this much more clearly than they do, and made better preparations for dealing with the problems that arise in it than they have so far made. These problems are broadly of two kinds. On the one hand there are those "mixed questions", as for example matters concerning Marriage and Education, of which M. Maritain says in his formal manner that

while affecting the earthly city, they also directly concern the good of souls and that of the Mystical Body; the Christian as a member of that Body has to consider them primarily and above all, not in reference to the temporal order and the good of the earthly city (which, moreover, suffers detriment if higher values are violated) but as they affect the supra-temporal good of the human person and the common good of the Church of Christ.\*

The existence of such questions is generally recognized, though our present arrangements for arriving at a common

\* *True Humanism*, p. 293.

mind and a common witness on the subject are not perhaps very satisfactory. But there is much less recognition that there exists another and wider class of subjects in this intermediate sphere which M. Maritain calls "a zone of truths connected with the revealed truths of which the Church is the deposit", truths that find their formulation as aspects of the Christian doctrine of man and society. Such truths, says M. Maritain, constitute "principles of a Christian political, social and economic *wisdom*" that should serve as "a theological firmament for the doctrines and more particular activities engaged in the contingencies of the temporal sphere". An effort has been made to elaborate such a "wisdom" in the great social encyclicals that have emanated from the Vatican in the last fifty years, and less formally in the essays towards a "Christian sociology" made from within the Anglican communion.\* It would, of course, be too much to say that particular judgments extracted from such documents ought to be regarded as binding upon individual Christians who are engaged in political and social movements. Yet they would hardly be justified in acting without any reference to a "wisdom" deriving from centuries of Christian tradition and applied to contemporary conditions by some of the most profound and acute of contemporary Christian thinkers. If those Christians who seek to make a practical impact upon the social and political movements of their times engage in their task without reference to the developing work of Christian sociologists and without any consultation with one another upon the basis of that work, then their contribution is likely to be a good deal less authentically Christian in character than it might be and than it ought to be.

\* Perhaps the most succinct summary from within the Church of England is provided by the document *A Christian Realm*, published by the Church Union, 1941.



There are thus at least three purposes for which Christians who may have divergent views on politics in the narrower sense of the term ought to unite for consultation and possibly for action. First, to consider together the problems with which the mood and the methods of secular political activity may confront them. Secondly, for the vindication and defence of Christian standards in regard to such "mixed questions" as Marriage and Education. And, thirdly, to discover whether a Christian doctrine of man and society does not demand, or at any rate suggest, a common policy in respect of certain social and political projects and programmes. But it is of little use to agree upon the value of such Christian co-operation in principle unless some effort is made to provide for it in practice. It is not *ad hoc* consultation in this or that emergency which we need so much as an established habit of Christian discussion, not of a merely academic character, but of the type that is designed to lead, wherever possible, to common action, and this not in respect of national issues only but in regard to local affairs also. Such co-operation should take place both within political parties and across them. Within them it would be directed to securing evaluation of the policy of the party or group, to the selection of projects to advance and of "priorities" among them, and to efforts to eliminate unworthy leaders, and to maintain a high standard of political judgment and of conduct in matters of propaganda. Across political parties, consideration of the three matters enumerated above might sometimes lead to a determination to promote or to support specific projects upon the value of which Christian people found they could agree without disloyalty to their divergent political convictions.

Though the idea of a Christian Party involves an implicit denial of the "autonomy of the secular" and is



therefore as unsound in principle as the embodiments of it have been unsatisfactory in practice, it ought not to be assumed that concerted Christian action is necessarily either impossible or undesirable at the parliamentary level. The present writer put forward a proposal for achieving this a dozen years ago,\* which he is still disposed to think worthy of consideration. Briefly, the suggestion was that a group should be formed among those M.P.s who took their Christian profession seriously enough for them to be impelled to declare that in regard to matters falling within the "intermediate" sphere described above they would, if the circumstances seemed to demand it, act together if necessary against their parties. For them to take this stand with any assurance it would be necessary to provide for the setting up, preferably under the authority of the Archbishops, of a committee of expert Christian sociologists. The understanding would be that where this committee agreed with a majority of the M.P.s that some provision in a parliamentary Bill involved an infringement of Christian social principle, the M.P.s would act together in voting against it, if necessary in defiance of the party whips. Nor need the functions of this joint body be obstructive only; they might well be constructive also in the promotion of legislation that no other group was particularly interested to sponsor. Valuable use might be made of the Private Members' Ballot in this connection. Rightly used, this machinery would in no way trespass on the "autonomy of the secular" or the responsibility of the individual legislator. Whether constituencies would elect or party caucuses choose candidates who announced their intention of adhering to such a Christian group (as it would of course be their duty to do) is another matter. In default of this perhaps rather ambitious proposal, how-

\* *Faith and Society* (1932), pp. 260-4, where certain practical difficulties in implementing the proposal are also discussed.

ever, it would certainly seem desirable that some informal efforts in this direction should be attempted.\*

That some determined attempt should be made to achieve a concerted Christian impact upon politics in appropriate circumstances would seem to be necessary if the more assured conclusions of Christian sociology are not to remain a purely academic matter. But it is very important that enthusiastic Christian reformers should learn how to distinguish between the various matters in regard to which their enthusiasm may be evoked. These would seem to fall into three categories. First, there are certain social and political demands which Christians may draw together to make, not in the abstract but with reference to particular situations. Whether they acted rightly in taking the stand they did may be a matter of opinion, but examples of such specific action were afforded by Archbishop Davidson in regard to the settlement of the General Strike, 1926, a stand which brought him, as representative of the religious bodies of the country, into conflict with the Government of the day, and by Archbishop Temple in 1934 when he demanded a restoration of the cuts made in unemployment benefit. There is no doubt plenty of room for discussion about what are the proper subjects for such challenges as these, and what issues might reasonably be imagined to provoke and what arguments to justify them in the future. But we ought to know how to distinguish such matters as involve—or are held to involve—basic Christian principles, and so to implicate the Church, and those deductions which we feel justified in drawing therefrom for ourselves but should hesitate to demand that other Christians must necessarily accept. There has, for example,

\* Note in this connection the highly significant and fruitful alliance of two Christian M.P.s from opposing parties, Sir Henry Slesser and Sir Robert Newman ("The Heavenly Twins") in the Parliament of 1924-9. Some account of this will be found in Sir Henry Slesser's autobiography, *Judgment Reserved* (1942).

been a disposition in certain quarters to assert that "common ownership" is not merely a desirable social expedient at this stage of industrial development but actually a Christian principle of high ethical significance. It would seem to require as much hardihood to maintain that this opinion is morally binding on all Christians as it would to assert that the traditional Christian stress on the need that some hold on property should be secured for all men forbids the State ownership of any of it. The bulk of Christian opinion is surely justified in holding that the nationalization of the coal mines, for example, does not require to be regarded either as a step forward in public morality or as a defiance of Christian social principles, but is a proposition to be decided on its merits for its advantage or otherwise to the public interest.

But there is a third type of viewpoint, and one for which Christians are not justified in appropriating a religious sanction at all: that which will be found on examination to involve no more than a personal opinion on what is essentially a secular issue. It is surprising, and a little alarming, to observe how easily the Christian social enthusiast will come to claim ecclesiastical authority for his individual convictions, and even be found to declare that "the Church teaches", when all he ought to say is "I think". It was remarked in the last chapter that we have to beware lest "bringing our religion into politics" may in fact mean turning our religion into politics—allowing, that is, a supernatural obligation to be degraded into a purely human dynamic. When we do this we are in effect demanding that God shall become an obedient ally of our personal enthusiasms, and it will not take much reflection to show that there could be no more blasphemous distortion of the true rôle of the Christian in politics than this.

"MAN FAGED WITH HEAVEN AND MAN FAGED WITH  
HISTORY"

THIS book has so far sought to establish that despite—or even because of—the sub-Christian character of our contemporary civilization, the Church has a claim to stake out in its political life and the individual Christian a part to play. But some of those who are ready to accept these contentions in principle, and who may have been persuaded of the validity of the arguments by which they have been supported here, are likely to find themselves dismayed by the effort to fulfil such obligations in practice. Since, as was said at the beginning of this book, there is a sense in which the Christian must always think even of human issues in terms of perfection, the necessity of coming to terms with the problems of any age as they are presented to it by history seems to involve so much compromise, if not actually with evil, at any rate with imperfection, that the Christian idealist tends to turn away from the political sphere, if not with disgust, at least with dismay. For the politician may appear to him to be by the very nature of his occupation a type of being with whom the Christian can establish no valid relation whatsoever.

This bafflement derives, of course, from that tension between the eternal and the temporal of which something was said in our opening chapter. It was there asserted that there is a real and inescapable tension between religion and politics, which has its origin in what is in essence an antithesis "between man faced with heaven and man faced with history". It may be well at this point, therefore, to examine rather closely, and in a more secular

context than has so far been introduced into this book, what is implied by the effort to grapple with an historical situation and what are the responsibilities alike of statesmen and of democratic electorates in face of one. For if Christians understood rather better than many even of the best of them do what are the conditions within which political decisions require to be made, they might be less distressed or bewildered than they often are by the limited benefits which are all that too often seem to follow upon them. We have to learn what it means to be faced, not with heaven, but with history, in a world where, though we "have no continuing city", we have, nevertheless, an unending and inescapable obligation to make what we can of the opportunities and responsibilities with which God has entrusted us.

Before a statesman, or anyone else, can grapple with or even consciously adjust himself to an historical situation to any good effect, he must make himself as clear as he can about the elements that constitute it, and he must submit those elements to a careful scrutiny. For unless he does this he will be in danger of mistaking social heresies for inexorable laws and fashionable fallacies for inescapable fate. It cannot, of course, be denied that heresies and fallacies, to the degree in which they exercise their dominion over the public mind—or absence of mind—operate as important factors in an historical situation. If, for example, a population has been led, by precedent or propaganda, to believe that currency must or ought to have some sort of relation to a supply of gold, the deviser of a Keynes Plan or the delegate to a Bretton Woods Conference is to that extent handicapped in attempting to introduce reason into a sphere dominated by superstition. He may, of course, be still more handicapped by the existence of a supply of gold in unparalleled quantity in one corner of the world and of a goldmining industry as a predominant



vested interest in another, especially if either region is one towards which he has political obligations. All this is but to say that Error and Power and Self-Interest are elements in an historical situation, elements the existence of which no realistic statesman can neglect. But it will make a vast difference to the attitude with which he confronts that situation if he can recognize the Error for what it is, can see that Power is not the same thing as a moral right, and can realize that Self-Interest, if not necessarily illegitimate within limits, affords to those affected by it a very poor basis for gaining an objective view of the public interest. Thus, to submit oneself to an historical situation does not imply that one accepts the validity of all the elements that contribute to make it up. Otherwise the statesman would merely resemble—as too often in fact he does seem to resemble—the man who sits in the driving-seat of a broken-down car being towed along the road, with no other function than to keep his derelict vehicle out of the ditch.

Clearly, an essential element in any historical situation is history itself. A people is what it is largely because of what has happened to it, and what it is capable of in any given situation will be partly determined by that. Of this the statesman must be aware if he is to show any statesmanship at all, and no doubt it was with this largely in mind that Napoleon declared: "let my son often read and meditate upon history; it is the only true philosophy." There has been a certain disposition lately to suggest that the budding statesman needs only to serve an apprenticeship in what are (rather too ambitiously perhaps) called the "social sciences", and a dozen years ago someone was found stupid enough to say: "for the problems of to-day we need only the knowledge of to-day." It might be replied that it is precisely too much reliance on the knowledge most characteristic of any particular age that con-



tributes in fact to magnify its problems by setting them in too narrow a perspective. Nor is it the social scientist only who tends to misconceive an historical situation from a failure to appreciate its historical derivation. The man of a too predominantly metaphysical bent of mind is apt, from his contemplation of truth in the abstract, to resent history merely for having happened. For him, as for Shelley,

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

No doubt too much awareness of its history may be a handicap to the development of a people. Such nations as the Poles and the Irish, for understandable reasons, suffer from too much historical memory. Then again the student of politics has to cope with the misunderstanding of history. Over-emphasis on the Teutonic element in our people by such historians as Green and Freeman in the last century was largely responsible for a very optimistic misjudgment of the nature and motives of modern Germany, at any rate before 1914. All that is claimed here is that the statesman must know not only the historical events that have influenced the past of his people, but must be able to assess the quality of its cultural and national tradition and the factors that go to make up the national temperament.

Obviously there are factors other than political that contribute powerfully to an historical situation. Of these the primary one is Religion—the character not so much perhaps of the professed belief as of the religious outlook of a community. One of the principal reasons why this country and its rulers have failed to understand the essence of the Indian situation is, as Professor Brogan has pointed out, because of the modern convention that religious considerations should be treated as non-existent or irrelevant. Nothing is more curious in the assumptions of

contemporary opinion than the view that, while the justification of religion is to be sought in the degree of concern which its devotees show for public affairs, it does not particularly matter what the supernatural tenets of that religion are. Mr. Christopher Dawson has shown conclusively in *Progress and Religion* that the social development of all human cultures has primarily derived from the nature of their beliefs about the nature of God and the destiny of man.

The theory which has most openly challenged this view is, of course, that of Marxism. And surely we could accept much of what the Marxists have to say as true if they would only say it in a less ill-proportioned way. Clearly, the elements that go to make up an historical situation are necessarily to a large extent economic. Most obvious among these is the character of economic techniques; while, for instance, if it is a cliché to talk of a "machine-made civilization", it is not a meaningless cliché. Further, the degree of social "conditioning" caused by environment is considerable; the experience of Evacuation in this war revealed that the essentially unnatural conditions of modern urbanism have become so "natural" to the bulk of our town-dwellers that a week spent away from them in the country is an ordeal too terrible to be endured. Again, there is the interesting phenomenon of the specific economic leanings of particular nations. Britain is an industrial nation by tradition and (perhaps) temperament, but she is not a nation that takes easily to mass production. This is suggested, for example, by the fact that workers in some of the Ford factories here have had to be heavily and not always successfully bribed not to go off to find jobs somewhere else on more varied work at lower wages. Industrial craftsmanship and a talent for qualitative production are national characteristics, and real elements therefore in the historical situation

of Britain to-day. But even in the economic sphere ideas count for much more than the Marxian realizes. The ideas may of course be wrong. It is, for instance, a commonplace with many intelligent folk to say that our people's notions of the possible have been formed under the influence of an "age of scarcity". But if those who rightly speak to us of an "age of plenty" show no discrimination in face of what it is that a highly developed industrialism will most easily produce plenty of, and fail to distinguish between the organic and the purely material, they and we may come to misunderstand our "historical situation" as badly in the future as our economists and our bankers have done in the past.

An historical situation will often present the statesman with phenomena which, because his intelligence can perceive them to be highly inconvenient, he will be tempted to overlook or to underrate. Such to-day, for example, are the sentiments clustering round the idea of the nation and all that appears to threaten its sovereignty. To treat these as if they could be wished away, or to assume that, because they seem from the "planning" standpoint to be inconvenient, they can safely be regarded as unimportant, or even unreal, as many do to-day, is not statesmanship. To quote Professor Brogan again: "The small nationalities were not 'created' by the Treaty of Versailles but revealed and liberated by the collapse of the Second Reich and the empires of the Romanovs and Hapsburgs."\* This does not mean that there is not a real need that they should for many purposes work much more closely together than "sovereign states" instinctively do, but it does suggest that to tell them that they are not to consider themselves sovereign states at all will not be the best way to get them to do so. The statesman who is truly such will deal with those elements in an historical situation which he

\* *The English People*, p. 224 n.

recognizes as real, but which are also for certain purposes inconvenient, not by challenging their right to exist, since by doing so he is likely to magnify the sentiments of resistance which they will generate. He will rather suggest a practical line of action to evade their difficulties that those concerned can recognize as advantageous to themselves. That sort of functional co-operation between peoples for specific purposes, which someone has christened "gas and water internationalism", is an important example of this method.\* There are limits to its effectiveness and dangers in its too indiscriminate application, but it is significant in that it recognizes an historical situation and acts within the terms it imposes, without a mere submission to its difficulties, but equally without a defiance of its realities.

There are, of course, other methods of approach to such problems, and Hitler's policy between 1933 and 1938 was a good example of one of them. A good many people at that time, in all parts of the world, were convinced that the economic and even the cultural life of the European continent needed to be more closely integrated. Hitler played on this conviction to mobilize support for his "New Order", by which of course he meant nothing else than the hegemony of Germany. Again, a good many people were sensible at that time of the degradation, unreality and ineffectiveness of much that went by the name of "democratic" politics. Hitler played on this feeling too, to induce a charitable view of his own brand of authoritarian government. So far he was in his own perverted way a "statesman" in that he knew how to interpret the historical situation to justify and facilitate what he had determined to do. But a statesmanship founded on injustice can never be anything but a limited statesmanship, since sooner or later it runs up against moral realities that it has, con-

\* See D. Mitrany's Chatham House Paper: *A Working Peace System*.

ssciously or unconsciously, overlooked. This Hitler did in 1939. One of these realities was the existence of national pride and honour, which—fortunately, let us say, in spite of our "federalists"—was epitomized in Poland, Greece and Jugoslavia. Another was that traditional Christian view of the person as non-instrumental by nature, and in a measure sacred, the persistence of which at length roused first Britain and then the whole English-speaking world to resistance.

Some situations indeed seem to exist only to be challenged. Nevertheless, there is such a thing as a valid political realism, and even the Christian statesman must so far accept the situation which confronts him as to be ready to act in the terms which it proposes. It is no use his saying, in effect, like the Irishman, that if he were going to the New Jerusalem he wouldn't be starting from here. And what is true of the statesman is true of the nation on which in some measure he must, as in a democracy he ought to, depend. The further down and through an electorate goes this readiness to face and not retreat from facts, with the informed intelligence which it demands, the higher will be the level of the political life of a community. Yet it is an unhappy fact that much of our social idealism is in reality mere escapism; it will not "begin here" because it is so much occupied with its resentment at being here at all. Patriotic spokesmen were once fond of denouncing their opponents as friends of every country but their own; some of our more disgruntled Christian social idealists seem to be friends of every century but their own. But it is to our own century that our responsibility lies, and our social life is not a game that we can refuse to play because we were not consulted about the rules. This escapist tendency requires to be stigmatized because some of our most acute social critics, especially in Catholic circles, are affected by it. But of course the opposite



tendency is far more common and probably more dangerous, that tendency which accepts the contemporary set-up without question and takes the line of least resistance as a standard for its "reform". The distinction that matters in the realm of statesmanship is that between those who are mastered by their time, whether that mastery takes the form of an indiscriminating acquiescence in all that it would impose upon us or in a sulky refusal to act in the situation which it poses, and those who refuse to be thus mastered. It is faith—and as Christians believe *the* Faith—which can and should afford us power to resist this mastery by the insight it will give us into both the reality of an historic situation and the eternal destiny of man.

In conclusion, there are two matters to which Christian people, when they are concerning themselves with political problems, ought to give a closer attention than is commonly forthcoming. One is the question of what may be called "social priorities"—*i.e.*, the order in which a number of policies and objectives, all perhaps valid in themselves, may most effectively be pursued. This matter is indeed one to which the quality of statesmanship particularly requires to be applied and in respect of which it can most effectively be demonstrated. And statesmanship in a democratic community is not a capacity that needs to be exhibited only by those we call statesmen; it is demanded in some measure of all those who participate, however indirectly, in political decisions. Now those who come to politics, as professedly Christian people must be presumed to do, with a strong sense of moral responsibility, tend to regard political alternatives as necessarily involving a choice between right and wrong. But this is an altogether false simplification of what is often a much more complex matter. Many political questions turn upon a choice either between two courses of action both good in



themselves but temporarily incompatible with each other, or between two policies to carry out both of which the resources do not exist. The matter is of particular importance just now, since a good many controversies in the post-war situation are likely to turn upon questions of this kind, though it may not be immediately obvious to all concerned that this is in fact what is at issue. We see already, for example, the emergence of what is likely to present itself as a struggle between those who are demanding the immediate or early removal of governmental "controls" over industry and those who are contending that their maintenance is essential in the public interest. This is just the sort of controversy that easily generates a good deal of "moral" indignation and enthusiasm, so that the whole matter is presented to the public by both parties to it as a question of black and white. Yet it is quite arguable that no truly statesmanlike approach to this question would permit it to be stated in these terms. A particular example of "state control", justifiable and even socially necessary at one point of time, may be unjustifiable or even intolerable at a later one; applied to one process state control may sooner or later prove inappropriate, while applied to another it may reveal itself as permanently valuable. Similarly, a "liberty" demanded for to-day may be anti-social in effect, which applied for to-morrow would be socially stimulating. Here, of course, the problem of timing is complicated by the irrelevant emotions liable to be introduced both by the operation of self-interest and the influence of "ideological" partisanship. But in regard to other post-war problems the question for statesmanship will be which objectives, among a number admittedly desirable, ought to be selected for preference. The training of teachers and the building of new schools, for example, are not presumably to be regarded as incompatible pursuits; thus the delay in the advance of education

imposed by both presents no problem of this kind. But the quality and length of teachers' training will have to be balanced against the urgent need to raise the school age and to reduce the size of classes.\* And the erection of schools will have to find its proper place in an enormous building programme in which the provision of homes for the returning Service men will be claiming a high priority.

The problem of "social priorities" is thus seen to be very largely one of a choice between two or more "goods"; the questions that it raises are likely to demand for their solution an exercise of the cardinal virtue of Prudence rather than that of Justice. (It may indeed be well for Christians to remind themselves—and others—that Prudence and Temperance are as necessary in politics as the often more spectacular virtues of Justice and Fortitude.) The other problem that most commonly arises in the handling of particular "historical situations" is one in which the choice seems only too often to be a choice between two evils. This is the problem of means: the question of how far all action in politics is liable to implicate those engaged in it in methods which fall below the level of absolute standards. The question may arise in respect of honesty of presentation and justice to opponents, and, in a rather different way, in regard to the treatment of the citizen made the subject of social legislation as in the fullest sense a person—a free and responsible being. Something has been said about various aspects of this question in earlier chapters of this book; it is one that conscientious Christian people have found to be a torturing one throughout history, and they are never likely to find it anything else. For it is here that the sphere of the absolute encounters that of the relative; where dreams and schemes conceived in terms of ideals and principles meet and clash with the facts of human

\* A similar problem will arise in regard to the immensely important question of the training of the clergy.

limitation and the consequences of human sin as they manifest themselves in the particular circumstances of a specific historical situation. Enough was said about this "tension" in our opening chapter to make it unnecessary to go over the ground again here. It may, however, help to clarify the matter somewhat if we divide this problem of method into two broad categories: questions surrounding the means by which power or influence is attained or held, and those that concern the means by which it is proposed that policies devised in the interests of the great body of citizens shall be applied. Both aspects of the problem are of the first importance for the exercise of a conscientious statesmanship, for as one who sought—and secured—election to Parliament as a "Christian candidate" has declared:

The methods that men use live after them;

Their ideals are oft interred with their bones.\*

In regard to the former problem it was suggested in the last chapter that "Christians must face what is at least a very strong possibility, that they will find the working of the political 'machine' most effective just in proportion as it rejects the type of political leadership which it is their duty to give". No more need be said about this now further than to insist that here surely is a sphere in which the Christian can have no justification for compromise of any kind. If he is a political candidate, for instance, it is his bounden duty to set his face like a flint against hypocrisy, injustice to opponents, false simplifications of complex issues, and all efforts to overturn a rational judgment upon affairs by employment of any methods savouring of mass hypnotism. He may not be able to

\* Mr. George M. Ll. Davies in a challenging and original pamphlet, *The Politics of Grace*. I believe Mr. Davies is the only person ever elected to the House of Commons under this title, and circumstances did not encourage him to repeat the attempt.

control the means used by all his supporters, but he must make every reasonable effort to do so. If, alternatively, he is active in the support of another, he may have to withdraw that support if he is not satisfied that the campaign is being conducted on truly responsible lines. What applies before and during an election must equally apply after it, whether in Parliament, on the platform or in the press. Much is said in rather vague terms about the need for Christians "to raise the level of our public life". There is perhaps no more effective way of doing this than by the setting up of a new standard in the conduct of political controversy by all Christian people who engage in it. To achieve this it may well be that, as is suggested in the final chapter of this book, we shall need to ascend from the plane of the cardinal to that of the theological virtues.

That political life involves give and take, and compromises between what would seem to us not only ideally best but even immediately practicable, and what co-operation with others requires us to accept, is, of course, a commonplace. There need not be (though of course there always may be) anything discreditable in this; in fact such give and take may, as was suggested in the last chapter, be at once a divinely ordained means for overcoming the limitations of individuals and for abating their disposition to self-righteousness and self-importance. Politics are not to be entered upon safely unless they are seen as a sphere not only for the exercise of power but for the acceptance of discipline. The practical problems which may arise from a conflict of loyalties, problems very characteristic of political life, are not for the most part such as can be decided in advance on abstract grounds of principle. The Christian in politics will presumably be especially conscious of the moral challenges they may present, but he will have to solve them as he goes along, thinking not only, or chiefly, of his own reputation for consistency and recti-

tude, but of his obligations to those to whom he is most directly responsible or in whose cause he has particularly engaged himself. That a politician should be conscious of scruples can never be anything but a good thing, both for him and for those whom he has undertaken to serve. But there may well be occasions when it is more important for him to fulfil his vocation faithfully than to trouble too much about how he may stand in public estimation. To paraphrase a famous maxim: a politician may please some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time; if he tries to do more he is very unlikely to be faithful either to them or to himself. He may have to accept a course of action which he himself dislikes in the interest of a larger good, the existence or the value of which others are not in a position to appreciate. Unless he is prepared to face such problems of conscience and their consequences with a brave heart he should take no prominent part in politics at all.

All this should be—and perhaps may be—obvious enough. More difficult is the problem of means as it affects the framing of legislation intended to improve what the Victorians were wont to describe as "the condition of the people". Reference has been made several times already to the familiar but important criticism that much of our social legislation is "servile" in tendency, and we saw in chapter I that in so far as this may be so it might result not from any passion for power in a few at the expense of the many or even from a contempt either for their rights or their capacities. It might derive from (i) the difficulty of dealing with people in large numbers except along rigid lines; (ii) the desire to remedy glaring abuses rapidly; and (iii) a tacit or even a sub-conscious assumption that our industrialized and "conurbanized" proletariat is not to be relied upon for the exercise of any high degree of initiative or power of self-



help. These are not disreputable motives; but a respectable motive does not in itself validate a policy or a project, however benevolent in intention. It is indeed somewhat alarming to find how many of those who proclaim themselves as pre-eminently the champions, not only of justice but of freedom, tend to equate "social reform" with something done to the people or at best for the people, rather than with the exercise of new opportunities or responsibilities by them or the securing to them of rights over property or even over their own labour, as against external authority, whether of the State or of monopoly capitalism. It is of course no use being unrealistic about all this or supposing that our elaborate (perhaps over-elaborate) system of social services ought to be, or could be, "scrapped" as the preliminary to an immediate inauguration of a society of eager and assiduous small owners. The "historical situation" of our contemporary industrialism, with its great mass of too largely passive agents, is the legacy of two hundred years in which social heresies and economic vices have combined to mar all the wonders that man has achieved in this period. We have to act in this situation, with the limitations that it has bequeathed to us, but we have not to be dictated to by it or to accept its characteristic valuations of man and his meaning because influential persons have rationalized them into allegedly "social sciences". The danger is not so much—perhaps not at all—that a handful of anonymous tyrants, whether identifiable as bankers, bureaucrats, capitalists or politicians, are conspiring to impose themselves as masters upon a servile mass bribed into subjection by *panem et circenses*—devitaminized bread and dehumanized cinemas. It is that some such result may in fact come about not by design but by accident, because the methods devised by reformers to ameliorate the lot of twentieth-century man are not founded on any true understanding either of his



nature or his needs. There is, for example, everything to be said for "social security", and even something to be said for "full employment", if these things arise as by-products of objectives, personal and communal, which are valid in themselves. But if they are turned into ends, the means used to attain them may well make men instrumental to the social process instead of *vice versa*. "The methods that men use live after them", and Christian reformers will hardly secure an acquittal from the tribunal of history by pleading the purity of their ideals, if at the end of the twentieth century this world—and this country in particular—is less "habitable" for Christian men than it was at the beginning. To prevent this is perhaps the greatest challenge of our own historical situation.

## THE FACTOR OF "ESTABLISHMENT"

THIS book has been written so far without any direct reference to questions that involve differences of denomination. What has been said, about both Christian principle and Christian practice, has been based upon the assumption that here is a sphere in which Christians in this country are, or may be, happily free to take common action together without any hindrance from the fact that they are members of different communions or "schools of thought". It would of course be untrue to assume that theological divergences have no relation to political philosophy. Had this book included what it specifically excluded at the outset, a discussion of the Christian philosophy of the State, it would have been necessary to distinguish at least three characteristic strains of thought in this matter, Catholic, Protestant and Liberal Christian, which not only are still incompletely harmonized but are, fairly certainly, incapable of an ultimate synthesis. Nevertheless, such a book as Dr. Micklem's *Theology of Politics* suggests the existence here of a closer approximation to agreement in the sphere of Christian political philosophy than we might have expected to find, and offers firm ground for a considerable measure of practical common action between Christians in face of the political challenge of to-day.

There is one circumstance, however, that does sharply distinguish the situation of one religious body in this country *vis-à-vis* the State from that of the rest: the "establishment" of the Church of England. It is therefore necessary to devote this chapter to a specifically Anglican problem and to enquire whether this unique situation in

any respect implies or involves a unique function. It is fairly certain that in every previous century of English history it would have been assumed that it did. It is obvious on reflection, however, that some at any rate of the grounds for that assumption no longer hold good, and, if others of them do, it is in a context remarkably different from that arising in any of the periods in which the assumption was previously held. Put as succinctly as possible, the question is: Does the establishment of the Church of England lay upon it any unique and peculiar responsibility (whether it be regarded as a burden or an opportunity is beside the point) to guide the conscience of the nation and its rulers and to make representations or pronouncements to that end? Or, to put the matter in another way: Is the prophetic responsibility of this Church as a supernatural institution in some way heightened or conditioned by the fact of its relation to the State as it has developed in English history?

It is a good thing when one has to consider a disputable and perhaps unfamiliar proposition, especially if it should happen to be a proposition with which one may not spontaneously agree, to consider it as set forth in its most effective and persuasive form. For this reason it may be appropriate to make some substantial extracts from a lately published pamphlet by Canon Charles Smyth\* which deals at some length with this subject. He begins his discussion of it by quoting the late Archbishop Temple's description of the purpose of the great Albert Hall meeting he addressed in September, 1942, as being—

to affirm the right and duty of the Church to declare its judgment upon social facts and social movements, and to lay down principles which should govern the ordering of society.

\* *Religion and Politics*. A lecture delivered in Winchester Cathedral, December 2, 1942. Published by S.P.C.K.

"But," asks Canon Smyth, "who gave it this right?" He then continues:

Here I must beg leave to refer you to Professor Leonard Hodgson's sermon, preached before the University of Cambridge on June 14, 1942, which is printed in full in the *Cambridge Review* of October 10. . . . In it Professor Hodgson demonstrated from the Scriptures the argument that it is indeed the right and the duty of an Established Church to criticize the social, economic, or political arrangements of the nation, but that a Church which is not established has no such authority to perform the function of a conscience for the whole community, and in fact enjoys no *locus standi* in these matters. "It is," he said, "a significant fact that whenever Christian writers or preachers wish to assert the duty of the Church to act as the conscience of the State, it is always to the Old Testament that they have to turn for Biblical sanction, and not to the New. It is to prophets such as Amos, Micah and Isaiah that we have to turn if we wish to find Biblical precedent for interference in social, economic, industrial or political affairs. I have called this a significant fact, but it is one of which the significance is often overlooked. Our Lord and His disciples were not in a position to interfere as those prophets were. When the prophets prophesied, they spoke as representatives of the God whom king, nobles and people all professed to worship and serve. Speaking to those who were responsible for the organization, control and conduct of the nation's business, they recalled to their minds the obligations arising out of their religion. *I say that the significance of this fact is often overlooked because we often find the same people demanding both the disestablishment of the Church and its assertion of its prophetic ministry, thus ignoring the witness of the Bible to the truth that only an established Church is in a position to be prophetic.* As is well known, the position of the Christian Church was changed in this respect by the Edict of

Milan in the year 313, and before the end of that century bishops such as St. Ambrose were in a position to speak to Roman Emperors as Elijah had spoken to Ahab and Isaiah to Hezekiah. There are, I know, good Christians who deplore this development in the history of the Church, who regard that first recognition of the Church by the State as one of the greatest catastrophes in the religious history of mankind. I cannot see it that way myself. . . . However that may be, whether on this point you agree with me or not, the fact remains that in the fourth century this step was taken, and that here in England to-day the position of the Church is like that of the Church of the Roman Empire at the end of the fourth century, not like that of the Church in New Testament times. It has to exercise a prophetic ministry, and to seek to perform the function of a conscience for the whole community. . . ."\* Here it is interesting to observe that the same point had been to some extent anticipated by J. H. Newman in the passage from which I have already quoted:

"... If the primitive believers did not interfere with the acts of the civil government, it was merely because they had no civil rights enabling them legally to do so. But where they have rights, the case is different; and the existence of a secular spirit is to be ascertained, not by their using these, but their using them for ends short of those for which they were given. Doubtless in criticizing the mode of their exercising them in a particular case; difference of opinion may fairly exist; but the principle itself, the duty of using their civil rights in the service of religion, is clear; and since there is a popular misconception, that Christians, and especially the clergy, as such, have no concern in temporal affairs, it is expedient to take every oppor-

\* The *Cambridge Review* (published by W. Heffer and Sons, Cambridge, price 6d.), October 10, 1942, vol. lxiv, pp. 11-12. [Italics mine.]



tunity of formally denying the position, and demanding proof of it. . . .”\*

It is on this ground that I find myself unable to agree with the [late] Archbishop when in his speech at Birmingham on November 14, 1942, he stated it as his “own conviction that the Church as such ought not to be interested in the question of Establishment one way or the other. We have our divine commission: let us set ourselves to fulfil it. If as a result or for any other reason, the State wishes to separate itself from us, let it do so. . . . Our commission is from our Lord and wholly independent of any kind of earthly authority.” In a sense that is true: but when the Archbishop says “*wholly* independent”, he seems to overlook the traditional distinction between *potestas ordinis* and *potestas jurisdictionis*, to which the course of the struggle between the Church of Norway and the Quisling Government has lately given a new emphasis.† Our primary and essential commission, the commission without which we could not be a true Church, is indeed from our Lord: but we also hold a secondary and supplementary commission from the nation to be the national symbol and expression of Christian faith of the English people, and to be in some sort the keeper of the public conscience. That is in fact the minor premiss of everything that the Archbishop is doing at this moment [1942]. His public pronouncements upon social duty cannot be dissociated from his official and socially-created status as Primate of All England: were the same things to be said by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster or by the Moderator of the Free Church Council, they would not carry the same authority, nor, for that matter, would they receive the same attention. . . .

\* J. H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833), Chapter III, section ii, p. 277.

† After the Trondheim Cathedral incident of February 1, 1942, the Norwegian bishops, headed by Bishop Berggrav, resigned in a body: that is to say, they resigned their offices while retaining their spiritual



At all events I am thankful that the Archbishop should have been so prompt to dissociate himself, in his Birmingham speech (November 14), from the ingenuous remarks of his platform partner at the Albert Hall (September 26), the Right Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps, K.C., M.P., Lord Privy Seal. You will recall that, having suggested that we might well adopt as our Christian objectives the five simple desires of the people of the U.S.A. as expressed by President Roosevelt, including "the ending of privilege for the few"; and having, by what can only be described as a very daring piece of exegesis, applied to this secular-idealist programme the Dominical injunction, "This do and thou shalt live"; Sir Stafford proceeded to the conclusion: "If privilege is to be ended, then we must be prepared to give up our privileges with the rest, not excluding the privilege of endowment and of establishment for the Church. . . . The Church must show its faith in its own message regardless of all cost, for either the Christianity in which we believe is no more than the whited sepulchre of the Pharisees, or else it is the most real thing in our lives. . . ."\* Sir Stafford's use of the

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functions. Their letter of resignation, dated February 24, addressed to the Church Minister in the Quisling Government, and signed by all the seven bishops individually, contains this passage: "What the State has committed to my charge, I relinquish. The spiritual calling which has been ordained to me at the altar of God remains mine, by God and by right. To be the mouthpiece of the Holy Word, to care for the congregations and to be the spiritual father of the clergy, is and continues to be my calling. I shall in the future attend to this as far as is possible for one who is not a State official. But to continue administrative co-operation with a State which uses violence against the Church would be to fail in that which is most sacred." (*The Spiritual Issues of the War*, No. 123, March 12, 1942; cf. *The Times*, March 4.) Nearly all the Norwegian clergy announced from their pulpits on Easter Day (April 5) that they were following the example of their bishops while maintaining the same significant distinction between office (delegated by the State) and function (ordained and conferred by God). (Cf. *The Times*, April 8.)

\* *The Church Looks Forward*, pp. 29-31.

word "privilege" in connection with Establishment and Endowment is palpably excusable on the grounds of ignorance; but he might profitably be referred to what is still, I think, the most brilliant defence of the Establishment, and one which has not yet been answered even by its author: I mean, Bishop Hensley Henson's *Cui Bono? An Open Letter to Lord Halifax on the Present Crisis in the Church of England*, published in 1898. I cannot refrain from quoting a little of the argument.

"I submit that the true and only legitimate standpoint from which to regard ecclesiastical questions is that of the religious interest of the nation. The Church of England is the principal instrument by means of which Christianity is brought to bear on the national life. . . . As a denomination, the Church is painfully, almost ridiculously, insignificant when compared, not with the Nonconformist bodies, none of which can vie with her in numbers, but with the nation itself, which accepts and commissions her as its spiritual organ. . . . [But] her denominational weakness gives no truthful indication of her general influence. The National Church bears on the national life in a thousand unsuspected ways. Her power is felt, and always felt for good, in many directions; perhaps her highest and most beneficent achievements are not capable of tabulation in the *Church Year-Book*. . . . Now these immense national services do justify to the conscience of the democracy the continued establishment of the Church, in spite of the fact that, as a denomination, she is far too insignificant to claim a national recognition. . . . Establishment remains to-day in an attenuated form, binding the Church to wider duties, conferring on the people large religious franchises, but conveying no privilege to the one and inflicting no hardship on the other. . . . The State asks from the Church a large sacrifice of denominational liberty; it offers in return a splendid

vantage ground from which to wage her spiritual warfare. The Church has to choose between her own interest as a denomination and the interest of her redemptive work. My Lord, I cannot doubt what is her duty: she carries the name and commission of Him Who, in His own Person, gave example of Self-suppression. . . ."

However, the Archbishop contented himself with pointing out that to embark on a campaign for Disestablishment would be untimely and would involve immense complications just when it is most urgent that we should be concentrating upon the real task of the Church rather than upon the side-issue of its relations with the State. He then continued: "As a citizen I should on the whole regret [Disestablishment], because I think that the Establishment carries with it certain values for the life of the State and the nation that could not be replaced. But it is a question for the State and for ourselves as citizens; it is not a question for the Church or for us as members of the Church."

There, with all humility, I differ. I cannot accept this dichotomy between the Christian as citizen and the Christian as Churchman. The religious interest of the nation is a proper question for the Church, and for us as members of the Church. That the National Establishment of the Christian Religion should be Anglican is, in my judgment, an important but yet a secondary consideration: in Scotland, for example, it is Presbyterianism that is established. But that there should be a National Establishment of the Christian Religion is, as I believe, of paramount importance.† It is important, as Bishop Phillpotts ("Henry of Exeter") said of the

\* H. Hensley Henson, *Cui Bono?* (1898), republished in his *Cross-Bench Views of Current Church Questions* (1902), pp. 128, 133-5.

† It was on very similar grounds that the Rev. R. W. Sibthorp in his Roman Catholic days remained a staunch opponent of Disestablishment; cf. J. Fowler, *Richard Waldo Sibthorp: A Biography* (1880), pp. 180, 319, 322, 352, and *passim*.

presence of Bishops in the House of Lords, "not in order to make the Church political, but in order to make the State religious."\* I have for some time thought—and the evidence of the Archbishop's remarks rather confirms me in this apprehension—that where contemporary Anglican theology is defective is not in its doctrine of the Church, but in its doctrine of the State.

With this final—very suggestive—verdict it is possible to agree without finding all that goes before it equally convincing.

It will be observed, however, that in all this Canon Smyth is not arguing the question of the validity of establishment in its widest sense. He is not contending that this singular arrangement imposes no handicaps upon a prophetic church; he is not even explicitly arguing, though he certainly seems to be implying, that on balance the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. He is, as this writer understands him, advancing the proposition that the right and duty of priests and prelates to address definite pronouncements to a particular nation is dependent on its National Church being established. This may perhaps seem to many a somewhat extravagant proposition. Without embarking on an "all-in" discussion of Establishment in its widest implications, the ground might at least be cleared by agreeing to dismiss the hypothesis that Establishment is an ecclesiastical racket run at the expense of an indignant people by a set of prelatical conspirators. We can perhaps agree with Professor Brogan that Establishment represents "a public recognition by the English State of a vague historical respect for Christianity and still more for a very old traditional institution called 'the Church' ", and that though "the Church of England

\* Speech in the House of Lords, March 22, 1832; quoted in R. N. Shutte, *The Life, Times, and Writings of the Right Rev. Dr. Henry Phillpotts, Lord Bishop of Exeter*, vol. i (1863), p. 361.

may only be the Church that the majority of English people stay away from, they want it to be there to stay away from".\*

All this one may accept as true, while feeling it necessary to call attention to the danger of a situation in which that very large percentage of our population which does not belong to the established church in any fully sacramental sense, and yet is not actively antipathetic to Christianity, can have the satisfaction of getting its religion done for it, as it were, without the trouble of having to exert itself in the matter. This at any rate will not be everyone's "idea of a Christian society", and one cannot think that St. Paul would have formed any very favourable opinion of it. The Church of England may, as Canon Smyth declares, have received "a secondary and supplementary commission to be the national symbol and expression of the Christian faith of the English people", but there is a difference between a symbol and a substitute. And if we begin to enquire into what it is that the "C. of E." symbolizes to the average Englishman, we shall find that it bears only the remotest resemblance to the Apostles' Creed. To "establish" an institution on the basis of an assumption is a somewhat hazardous expedient at any time, but when that assumption bears no closer resemblance to the facts than does the ethical aspiration of the average man to the Faith of the Incarnation, the value, even the validity, of such a national symbol as Establishment is at the very least a debatable question.

But this is not really the question with which we are concerned here. We have to consider first whether the duty of Christian spokesmen to address pronouncements to a particular nation is dependent on their church being an established one. It may no doubt be argued that this relationship imposes a special duty, though, even so, it

\* *The English People*, pp. 104-5.



would be going rather far to suggest that no such duty would otherwise exist at all; but to contend that it confers a *right* would seem to involve making the national obligation of the Church in matters of social righteousness dependent upon the attitude which the State chooses to take up in respect of it. Surely this is a position which no Church imbued with the prophetic spirit will or ought to be ready to accept. No doubt the situation of an established church involves it in certain special responsibilities, just as the situation of a Poet Laureate involves him in the responsibility of at any rate consulting his Muse on the approach of certain ceremonial occasions. The leaders of an established church can reasonably be expected, and even perhaps required, to come out with "pronouncements" in certain national contingencies which the bishops of an unestablished one might, perhaps wisely, prefer to pass over in silence. It is at least arguable that, for example, the recurrent necessity of saying something on "Days of National Prayer" and similar occasions when patriotism and piety are somewhat confusingly blended, is one which does the cause of Christianity less good than harm. "Recalls to Religion" uttered by prelates whom the general public has some legitimate difficulty in distinguishing from state officials are apt to take on the character of incitements to the strengthening of national morale rather than of exhortations to spiritual rebirth. In any case it seems somewhat unreal, and even a little disingenuous, to suggest that the only alternative to the rôle of an established church is one analogous to that of the outlawed Christian community of the first centuries. The Roman hierarchy here do not seem to think that the right to address counsel or remonstrance to this nation is forbidden them by the fact that their Church is not established in this island. The late Cardinal Hinsley was indeed always ready, on appropriate occasions, to recognize that the

existence of an established church here gave it a natural primacy of initiative in matters of this sort, but he would never have admitted that this affected the *right* of his communion to speak to those outside its borders on matters concerning human justice and the natural law.

Apart from this, however, we are often asked to consider whether establishment does not offer an opportunity which the Church ought not to renounce for the sake of its own interests. This is, of course, quite another matter. It is clear that even the Churchman who is most sensible of the confusions and intrusions that establishment involves for our branch of the Catholic Church in this land might agree that here was a burden that had been handed down to us by history and one that God might require us to continue to carry so long as the State made no impossible demand upon us in the sphere of faith or order—though indeed it makes some pretty tough demands in the latter sphere already! We may even agree with Canon Smyth in dissenting from the late Archbishop's view that this is not a matter for us as members of the Church, and assert with him that "the religious interest of the nation is a proper question for the Church, and for us as members of the Church". But even more so is the religious interest of the Church, and there might come a time—if it has not arrived already—when the State connection imposed such handicaps on the spiritual development and the prophetic mission of the Church that it would be the right and the duty of Churchmen to demand that the Church should be released from it. It is generally a mistake, however, to anticipate historical situations; disestablishment is not a live issue to-day, not so much, let us realize, because our people are "essentially Christian" (though they probably are still definitely theistic), but because they do not really take religion seriously enough to feel that issues involving Christian order are of much consequence. A truly

prophetic Church, "afire with faith and free", and demanding that Britain become in reality a Christian realm, might create a very different situation. Whether establishment would be an opportunity or a handicap, or even remain a possibility, in such circumstances is certainly open to argument.

The material for such an argument cannot be set out at length here, but a few words may usefully be said in conclusion about the circumstances out of which a successful demand for disestablishment might arise, whether the prospect is one which the Church ought to welcome or not. These circumstances might be of three distinguishable kinds, or possibly have some admixture of all of them. In the first place, the opinion of the country as a whole might come to doubt either the value or the justice or both of the historic relation between the State and the Anglican communion. In fact, as has been already suggested, this would seem to demand a rather more definite interest in ecclesiastical affairs than the mass of our people now display. Such feeling does not seem very likely to arise unless the Church of England were to appear, whether rightly or wrongly, to be exploiting its "established" position for what presented themselves, or could be presented as, unworthy or self-regarding ends. Agitation for disestablishment in the past has often come from members of Non-conformist bodies who have felt that Anglicans have been enjoying ecclesiastical privileges for which no warrant exists or can exist, whether in the facts of the situation or in the nature of things. It is significant that very few complaints of this kind have been heard of recent years. It is indeed to be suspected that some—and perhaps a good many—"dissenters" have come to feel that the unique position of the Church of England, however indefensible it may appear to them to be in principle, does in practice secure a certain recognition for the Christian Faith which

it might be far less likely to receive if disestablishment were carried through.

A second circumstance that might bring about disestablishment would be a strong growth in the secularist complexion of a particular government, due perhaps to the victory of an anti-religious ideology. Such a government might either feel conscientiously bound to initiate the disestablishment of religion, or it might so act as to precipitate a clash with the Church—and even with “the churches”—out of which disestablishment might inevitably result. This is so speculative a contingency that it is difficult to say whether or on what precise grounds the Church might be justified in appealing to the nation to resist such a step. It might at least be claimed, perhaps, that an alteration of so much spiritual and historic significance ought not to be carried through without a quite specific “mandate” from the electorate, and could not legitimately be implemented by the exercise of a power conceded by the nation in respect of quite other issues.

Thirdly, disestablishment, or at any rate the demand for it, might arise as the result of a challenge which the Church might feel itself impelled to make on what appeared to its leaders to be some great moral issue. Here again we are in the realm of the speculative; the case may never arise, or even deserve to arise, and it may be unprofitable—or worse—to conjure up theoretical possibilities of this kind. Nevertheless, the contingency, in a world growing, and apparently likely to grow, more and more “post-Christian”, is one that cannot be ruled out. Whatever the value of establishment, the Church must never prize, or even appear to prize, it so highly that its leaders or its rank and file are held back from exercise of a prophetic responsibility from fear of constitutional or financial consequences.

When all is said, it seems difficult to quarrel with the

verdict of Dr. Temple that "the Church as such ought not to be interested [perhaps we might prefer to say 'too much interested'] in the question of establishment one way or the other. We have our divine commission: let us set ourselves to fulfil it." Is not this a matter in which Anglican Churchmen may be wise to "take no thought for the morrow"? The Church of England, Coleridge argued,\* is an essential part of the Constitution, but the Church *in* England will survive any blow to that Constitution "and perhaps be better seen for doing so". For the Church to force disestablishment upon a puzzled or reluctant nation might be to act in grave prejudice of its trusteeship of the Christian faith in this age and among this people. To resist it, if to do so involved compromise upon a vital moral issue, would be treachery to that trusteeship. May we not say of God's purpose in this, as in profounder matters, that he

is his own interpreter  
And he will make it plain.

\* *The Constitution of Church and State according to the Idea of each.*



## POLITICS IN TOWN AND PARISH

THE word "politics" is almost universally used to-day to signify tasks and problems that concern the nation as a whole. When people say that they are interested in politics, or bored with politics, or wish that they knew more about politics, they are nearly always referring to national, or perhaps international, issues. Much of what has so far been written in this book may seem to apply—or may have been assumed, perhaps mistakenly, to apply—only to such issues. That this should be so may seem at first sight curious, since, as was recalled in the second chapter, the very word *polis* meant a city, and political thought in Europe began with a concern with the affairs of the city state, a community in which every man knew, or might know, his neighbours. These "political" affairs dealt with matters of which he had, or could obtain, direct experience. The difference between such politics and what is to-day described as politics is something more than the difference between a small sphere and a larger one. It is the difference between something a man can see and understand for himself and something of which he can never hope to grasp more than a part, and that only theoretically or in imagination: This is not, of course, to say that politics as we know them to-day are in any essential way unreal; the nation state is still one of the decisive realities of the present stage of culture, at any rate in Europe, and we have got to grapple with its problems and its challenges as best we may. No doubt we are sometimes too optimistic about the capacity of ourselves or of others to do this; no doubt too we are over-apt to allow problems to be dealt with as if they were national in scope.

and character, when they could be much more effectively—to say nothing of democratically—tackled on a regional, a district or a civic basis. But there is no escape for us from national politics in respect of many matters of public interest, for they concern all Englishmen “equally and in the same way” (to adopt Mazzini’s useful definition of that which is essentially political). It is quite natural that twentieth-century man should have come to regard politics as necessarily a national matter.

It is natural, but it is not altogether accurate; and the result of doing so has been disadvantageous in so far as it has distracted interest from and lowered the prestige of smaller areas of government. It is something of a paradox that in an age in which there has been an ever-increasing glorification of the idea of democracy, and an ever wider extension of its forms, the control of many matters has passed further and further away from the average man and woman, and where these have remained under their eyes they have often taken very little interest in them. The mass of people in this country are still wont to talk of what “they” mean to do—or not to do—to “us” or for “us”, just as if democratic forms make no difference to the working of government. This habit is sometimes attributed to the suspicion that the determination of national policy is still a “class” matter. In fact, the remoteness of government is much more due to two quite different things: the enormous expansion of the work of the administrative expert in modern government, and the increase of centralizing tendencies at the expense of local initiative. Dangerous as these tendencies may be, it is of little use condemning them as if they were isolated evils quite separable from the general “set-up” of modern life, for they are indeed a largely inevitable consequence of it. Nor are they in all respects evils, and they might not operate as such at all if a confident and vigorous interest in local

affairs were there to check and complement them. But this is one of the things which democracy in this country, especially perhaps in the south of England, has come increasingly to lack. And it is not much use our complaining about bureaucracy and centralization unless we can discover why this is and resolve to do something about it.

One reason for this lack of "community spirit" is a simple one; it is that far too many of our local government areas have either ceased, or never begun, to represent or correspond with real communities. As was pointed out in chapter 2, "the health of politics depends upon the health of the *polis*, its reality as a community, its relation to the vocational life of man, its capacity to create houses which can be homes and citizens who can be neighbours". This chapter indicated some of the ways in which not only our vast "conurbations" but the "Redbelt" areas which surround them fail, and can hardly do other than fail, to satisfy any truly civic standards in this respect. This is something much more than an administrative problem; it is more even than a political problem; it is ultimately a religious problem.\* It would be so if only for the reason that, as the Report argues, "conditions which create an unnatural and frustrated type of social life make the evangelical and pastoral task of the clergy unnaturally difficult."† But it is so for less apparently "spiritual" reasons than this; because, for example, the purposes for which men live, as parents, citizens and workers, are concealed or deformed where the conditions of a true domestic and communal life are ruled out by the false ways of living which an unnatural environment imposes. No wonder that a priest is quoted in the Report as saying of the "nomadic" life of "Redbelt" that "the political and

\* See, on this point, *The Church and the Planning of Britain*: Report of the Social and Industrial Commission of the Church Assembly, 1944.

† P. 7.

municipal inertia has to be experienced to be believed, and is only comparable to that of the later days of the Roman Empire".\* The comparison is indeed most sinisterly suggestive. The Report is hardly claiming too much when it says that "the restoration of natural ways of living is perhaps a first condition of the recovery of a Christian Britain".†

Christian responsibility for promoting the recovery of local initiative, then, is a religious responsibility in the deepest sense. For to fulfil it will often mean a rediscovery and a reassertion of the nature and the needs of man, and efforts to help him to find a milieu in which it will not be unnaturally difficult for the message of the Gospel to reach him. Not all our communal life of course is so radically deformed, yet even in areas which do correspond to some traditional, vocational or social reality, the quality of local government is much lower than it ought to be. One of the causes of this surely is that far too few people have ever contemplated entering upon local office as a definite vocation. Here the Church has a message to preach and some—perhaps many—of its members a duty to fulfil. There are, of course, professional responsibilities of the first importance to be embraced in this sphere. It might, for instance, be effectively argued that there is no position open to so many people in which a man has the opportunity to do his neighbours so much good as that of a Town Clerk. Other municipal offices provide an almost equal scope. But for the majority of people public service will be of that honorary character which has always been so conspicuous and so healthy a feature of our national life. Unfortunately the motives with which such offices have been sought have not always been so disinterested as a vocation, truly embraced as such, demands. It would make an immense difference to the quality and vitality of

\* P. 7 n.

† P. 8.

our local life if Christian people could be brought to regard such service as a primary means by which their responsibility, not only to their neighbour but to God, could be discharged. Parish priests could do very much more than they have ever been wont to do to present these opportunities as challenges to the members of their congregations.

So far we have been speaking of the duty of the Church to illuminate civic action and to inspire its members to take a full share in it. But beyond this there is the problem of how far Churchpeople should join with other Christians in striving to promote a Christian witness in local affairs. There is nothing new in this idea; it was a favourite one with Bishop Gore, and Christian Social Councils have existed in a good many places from time to time. No very definite attempt seems to have been made to record the achievements or to assess the value of these bodies, but it is doubtful whether, speaking generally, they have arrived at any very positive conception of their function or made any notable impact upon local life. Various reasons can be advanced to account for this. It is often contended that interdenominational action of this kind rests upon too tenuous a basis of doctrinal agreement to be effective. No doubt the social philosophies that derive from the main schools of Christian thought (to adopt for a moment this characteristically modern description of differences concerning Faith and Order) are more divergent than was generally appreciated twenty years ago, though in fact these differences do not always coincide with denominational affiliations. Yet perhaps more crippling in effect is the absence of any sustained effort to bring into being a corporate mind. The easy assumption that because a group of men and women call themselves Christians they will spontaneously arrive at a common understanding and a united judgment upon some public question after a few



minutes' consideration of it is one of those sentimental illusions to which English people are only too prone. If there is to be any effective future for this sort of Christian "witness", it will only result from the regular coming together of the same group of people for a period long enough to enable them to develop some sort of common outlook. It will be all to the good if what are commonly called "social questions" are only one of the matters to which the attention of such a group is devoted, for Christian social action will never be really effective while it is regarded as a purely *ad hoc* matter which can be planned and taken in isolation from an outlook which covers the whole of life. The "Religion and Life Weeks" which have been organized so widely in recent years have at least the value that they approach human problems upon a less superficial plane. If they left behind them interdenominational groups whose members were consecrated to the attempt to understand each other, the essential challenges of the age, and the will and purpose of God in face of them, they might in due course give rise to the sort of "Christian witness" which could really shed illumination upon the secular issues of their localities. But until this is done there will always be a tendency to supplement a theological and doctrinal vagueness by a rather unspontaneous outpouring of ethical energy, which in fact is much more likely to express itself in efforts at prohibition than in any form of moral or social construction. "Vigilance committees" no doubt there must be, but to mistake their negative activities for religious leadership will do nothing to encourage an understanding of what is the essential mission of the Church to a wayward world.

It might be expected that those Anglicans who are sceptical of the validity or the effectiveness of interdenominational efforts would be the more zealous to promote interparochial activities as the means of building

up an informed churchmanship in their towns, out of which a Christian civic consciousness might develop. Yet it is all too seldom that one hears of any such thing. If the reason were that priests and people were too busily engaged on the study of theology or in the work of evangelization to consider such a possibility, one might console oneself with the reflection that these things would ultimately produce an increase of truly religious energy from which some effects in the civic sphere could not fail to manifest themselves. But unfortunately the truth is that the intellectual lethargy of the rank and file of Churchfolk, tolerated or even shared in by their pastors, has become so habitual that it passes without rebuke and almost without notice. And one of the most common results of it is that the influence, or at any rate the direct and observable influence, of the Christian community on the town in which it worships is less than that of any other group or interest of comparable size—and no one appears to regard this as in any way deplorable, or even remarkable.

So one comes at length to that ultimate unit of Christian association, the faithful who gather round an altar which serves what is normally a parish. From the civic standpoint parishes can be broadly divided into two kinds: those which function within an area which is in some real sense a community, having means for the expression of a secular communal life, and those (an increasing number in recent years) in which the Church is the only communal association to be found and the activities which it promotes the only exemplifications of community spirit. In the former case it will be for church members to take a full share, so far as their circumstances allow, in all valid associations—civic groups, W.E.A. branches, or whatever they may be, and this not only for the good and sufficient reasons for which anyone may attach himself to such bodies. Nor assuredly for any opportunities they may be

thought to afford for consciously "evangelistic" propaganda, since this involves infringement of the true "autonomy of the secular", and is grossly unfair to those who wish and have every right to preserve for these bodies a neutrality on religious issues. But Churchpeople ought to take their share in these communal activities because, without ever attempting or desiring to misuse them for "sectarian" purposes, they will often be able to put a point of view or to manifest an attitude which might well be lacking if they were not there to expound or to exemplify it. For a supernatural outlook upon life is not something that can validly exist without having any relation to issues that arise within the sphere of the natural. Some suggestions in regard to the way in which the exercise of the theological virtues may have an impact upon the political concerns of man are made in the following chapter.

The other type of parish is one that is all too often found in the "new areas" outside the great "conurbations", what the Church Assembly Report already quoted frankly describes as "those spiritual and cultural wildernesses which have spread like a 'red belt' round so many of our cities and towns".\* From a purely evangelistic point of view, however, these localities do present certain advantages to priests and church workers, for they almost thrust upon the Church the opportunity of cultural leadership. For no civic or educational agencies exist in these places; sometimes there is not even a "pub". If there are to be clubs the parish priest will pretty certainly have to start them, and at these clubs study circles, theatricals and musical groups are likely to emerge. Such a situation is not, of course, without its dangers, for though it may enable the priest to make easy contacts with the people of his parish, yet there is some danger that these essentially secondary activities of the Church may be confused with

\* *The Church and the Planning of Britain*, p. 4.

its primary ones, and the claims of religion come to be almost equated with good fellowship and neighbourliness. Indeed the Church's problem in these places is one of some subtlety, for while its agents will be right to bear in mind the dictum already quoted from the Church Assembly Report, that "the restoration of natural ways of living is perhaps a first condition of the recovery of a Christian Britain", they have got to bear two other things in mind also. The first, and more important, is that the *essential* work of the Church is to teach and to foster *super-natural* ways of living. But the second, though assuredly less important, is of real significance: it is that, since the temporal sphere exists in its own right, civic and cultural organizations ought to stand on their own feet. It is well that the Church should promote them, as indeed it has done again and again throughout history; but it is well, too, that it should send them forth into the world to look after themselves, as a wise parent will seek to do with his children.

The truth would seem to be that there is everything to be said for the priest, or some church member whom he may encourage to do so, standing forth as a social leader, and infusing those who live in these civically "depressed areas" with a determination to overcome the handicaps by which they are surrounded and make these "spiritual and cultural wildernesses" blossom like the rose. The parson in such localities may rightly regard himself as the *persona* of the place in a way analogous to that in which the country priest is still regarded in many villages, even by those who do not come to his church or perhaps account themselves Christians at all. But he will be wise to differentiate his civic from his spiritual function as clearly as possible, while showing his neighbours that he is as happy and as ready to serve them as long as they need him in the one capacity as in the other. The writer knows of one

priest in this situation who has set on foot a Civic Association, thus giving to the area he serves a confidence that it may one day hope to attain, against all handicaps, to the status of a real community. The Church, in initiating such activities, asks for nothing for itself, but proves to a dubious world that it does not seek to abstract the "souls" of men from that totality of life in which they are set, the true health and wholeness of which it must ever be striving to create or to restore.

How far in accepting such a rôle where it seems to be incumbent upon him, the priest may justifiably incur the risk of entangling himself in local politics is impossible to determine in the abstract. Perhaps he should not be too much afraid of such a risk. No sensible man will handicap his pastoral mission in any unnecessary way by implicating himself in controversies that have no relation to the responsibilities of his office. But issues sometimes arise in local affairs in which moral considerations are so directly involved that for a priest to take no account of them is to forfeit for himself and for his Church a leadership he has no right to abandon. It would not be appropriate to be more specific on this subject here other than to note that vested interests have not seldom been known to take possession of local government machinery. When this danger is plainly present, and where no other agency exists—or at any rate operates—to counter it, that responsibility may have to be shouldered by the spokesman of organized religion. It is perhaps somewhat remarkable that it has not more often been so.

This, however, is not what is generally meant by and complained of as "politics in the pulpit". This is a rather more complex subject than is often realized. There was a time, some sixty years and more ago, when a certain kind of "politics in the pulpit" was taken almost as a matter of course. Miss Flora Thompson, in a book giving a graphic



picture of an Oxfordshire village in the 'eighties, refers to its parson as one whose "favourite subject was the supreme rightness of the social order as it then existed", and gives an extreme example of this sort of "preaching".

It was the Sunday after the polling for the General Election of 1886, and he had begun preaching one of his usual sermons on the duty to social superiors, when suddenly something, perhaps the memory of the events of the past week, seemed to boil up within him. Flushed with anger—"righteous anger" he would have called it—and, his frosty blue eyes flashing like swords, he cast himself forward across the ledge of his pulpit and roared: "there are some among you who have forgotten that duty, and we know the cause, the *bloody* cause."

Later in life, says the author, "she liked to think that she had lived early enough to have heard a mild and orthodox liberalism denounced from the pulpit as 'a bloody cause'. It lent her the dignity of a historic survival."\*

Sermons of this type were not, of course, the only kind of "politics in the pulpit" heard in the nineteenth century. As long ago as 1851 Charles Kingsley had caused a sensation by his sermon, *The Message of the Church to Labouring Men*, delivered in a London church at a special service for workers who had come to London for the Great Exhibition. This caused the incumbent of the church to rise and denounce the preacher before the whole congregation and the Bishop of London (Blomfield) to prohibit Kingsley from preaching in the metropolis.† With the revival of the Christian social movement in the 'eighties sermons of this sort began to be heard again, especially from the priests of the Guild of St. Matthew, perhaps the most

\* *Lark Rise*, by Flora Thompson, p. 245.

† When Blomfield saw the sermon in print he withdrew the prohibition, though he expressed his disagreement with Kingsley's sentiments.

famous of which was that delivered by Thomas Hancock, and published in 1887 under the title of *The Banner of Christ in the hands of the Socialists*.

The question of "politics in the pulpit" has been widely discussed for the best part of a century, and it is not an easy one to settle in principle. Clergymen who preach the virtues of the *status quo* or warn their flocks against the dangers of relating their political enthusiasms to their religious beliefs are often quite sincerely unaware that their words may have any political implications at all. Yet it may very well be that to suggest the acquiescence of the Church in face of some social situation, or even to dissuade Churchpeople from attempting to form a Christian judgment upon it, may amount to taking sides on the issue involved. It may be quite legitimately argued that this or that social enthusiast who spoke of controversial matters in the course of his ministry, whether in 1848, 1888 or 1908, did so in the wrong way, or at any rate in a way that may seem to us now to be wrong. But it does not follow that he would have done better to have said nothing about the matter. "It is difficult to be angry and sin not", said Stewart Headlam, one of the most famous, and occasionally one of the most reckless, of these zealots; "it is much easier not to be angry at all."

It can be contended, however, that the situation to-day is in some important respects different from what it was sixty or even forty years ago. We have not achieved social justice yet; the needy have still to be relieved and the humble exalted; there are powerful interests still requiring to be subordinated to the public welfare. But there is no longer a widespread failure to recognize the existence of social obligations at all; the danger might even seem to be that these will be enforced at the expense of personal responsibility and individual initiative. The socialist priest of half a century ago, accused of "dragging his

politics into his religion", could (as he often did) reply that he was striving to fulfil two responsibilities of which the Christian spokesman must never lose sight: to stress the social interdependence of men, and to stand up for oppressed classes and individuals. The "socialism" of those days was not, as it has now become, partly a secular "ideology" and partly the programme of a powerful political party. It was not even a movement so much as a mood, and a mood in which Christian memories were mixed with humanitarian ethics. In so far as it strove, albeit often unconsciously, to substitute itself for the dogmatic faith of the Church, its Christian devotees ought perhaps to have been more concerned to emphasize their distinction from it than they sometimes were. But in so far as it was voicing something which industrial secularism had deliberately left out of account, the great majority of Churchmen ought to have given it a far warmer, even if a discriminating, welcome than they ever did.

The development in this century of what has been called an "autochthonous" Christian sociology—a body of teaching, that is, which springs from its own roots in Christian revelation and in the social traditions of the Church—gives the Christian preacher firm ground for instructing and enlightening his flock. And he can do so, normally, without suggesting to them that they should abandon those political differences which are validated, as this book has tried to show, by "the autonomy of the secular". This might well be true even if contemporary political differences were founded on principles more compatible with Christian valuations than is in fact commonly the case. And as things are, the Church has no more to gain in practice than it has justification in principle for aligning itself with political philosophies formed very largely under what are in effect secularist, or at any rate sub-Christian, influences, for it has been well said that "secular alliances

only divide the Church without converting men". However, the word "normally" was not inserted into the second sentence in this paragraph without good reason. For undoubtedly it might happen that some issue arose in our public life, or even in our party controversy, upon which it would be the duty of the Church to pronounce at the risk of appearing to take, or indeed actually taking, sides. A formal disavowal of all "politics in the pulpit" must not be used as a pretext for evading a prophetic responsibility. Such responsibilities, however, are not as a rule most clearly discerned or most effectively shouldered by individuals. The preacher's words will carry the more conviction when he is known to be voicing a view which cannot be dismissed as individual idiosyncrasy.

Politics, rightly understood, mean, of course, much more than those "end-products" of political disagreement which are the material of party controversy. Primarily they have to do with the ends which men seek through community and only secondarily with any problem of means. With ends the Church is necessarily concerned, but it cannot be indifferent to means "so far as the choice of them may frustrate and distort the purposes for which man, whether as a person, or as a family or communal being, has been created in the world which God has made".\* Politics in this sense, then, are a matter upon which a live parish ought to be accustomed and encouraged to form an opinion, and so far as may be a common mind. But it does not follow that the parish priest will be the best person to promote such studies or the pulpit the best place from which to lead them. In fact, the priest will inevitably have many other concerns closer to the vital functions of the sacred ministry, and his education for these may not have left him much time in which to acquire a grounding in the principles of politics or even in Christian sociology. It

\* *The Church and the Planning of Britain*, p. 3.

ought to become more and more recognized that proficiency in these subjects is primarily a responsibility of the laity, and their study and application an activity which the priest ought indeed to encourage and even in some measure to supervise, but the main burden of which ought not to fall upon him. It is not of course to be expected that experts in the theoretical aspects of these subjects will ever be found in every parish, though agencies for the religious education of adults may sometimes be able to arrange for their services to be at the disposal of those who desire them. Much more education of this kind needs to be done, and congregations aroused to the necessity of it. But there are few parishes where a handful cannot be found who out of their civic, professional or industrial experience can set the ball rolling, and accustom those who worship together to think together about problems which in these democratic days they will have to face anyhow, and will face all the better for having attempted to understand them in the light of their deepest beliefs about God's purpose for man and man's responsibility to accept and to fulfil it.

Much that has been said about politics in the town parish applies to the country parish also. But there are often important differences, depending upon the fact that, in the first place, the village is still very largely a natural community, and, in the second place, that the parson generally is, or may easily become, its "persona", its natural spokesman and leader. The rural community to-day is, of course, subject to influences which are bound to transform it in some respects, whether for good or ill. It is highly important that the Church should understand the nature of these influences, know how to form a judgment upon them, and find ways to defend that in the rural life of our country which needs to be preserved and to help to change that which ought to be altered. In the months



and years that are now before us, issues will inevitably arise in the sphere of national and international politics, the right settlement of which will affect the integrity of the village and even perhaps determine its survival. Church-people as a whole ought to understand these issues better than they do,\* and they may well turn for enlightenment upon the nature and needs of the countryman to those who from long exercise of the pastoral ministry in the countryside have unrivalled qualifications for understanding them. Such priests deserve to be more widely heard, but perhaps they do not always put themselves to sufficient pains to understand what are the political factors in the world outside which go far to determine the fate of those to whom they minister. A more attentive audience for what the country Churchman has to say, and a new determination on the countryman's part to understand and to express himself upon the questions which concern so closely not only his livelihood but his "way of life", are equally to be desired. Happily there is increasing evidence of the existence of both.

\* Information on this subject can be obtained from the Secretary of the Council for the Church and Countryside, St. Anne's Church House, 57a, Dean Street, W.1, who can supply literature and will endeavour to arrange for speakers to address meetings if desired.

## THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES IN POLITICS

AT a moment when the world is rather more disposed than usual to look to "the Churches", if hardly for a lead, at any rate for a friendly shove up the hill that lies before it, one thing is more than ever necessary: it is that Christian people should make it clear not only to the world outside but also to themselves that a religious body—and those who compose it—can only discharge what cannot be other than a religious responsibility in a religious spirit. There are two things which this might be interpreted to mean that it emphatically does *not* mean. In the first place, it does not mean that we should contrive to become so "spiritual" that we can justify an indifference to or an evasion of responsibility on the natural plane. Just as our religion can never be justifiably employed as a tool, so "spirituality" can never be legitimately offered as an alibi. On the other hand, it does not imply any theoretic invasion of the "autonomy of the secular". Politics, as this book has insisted throughout, are not a "department" of religion; they exist by God's ordinance in their own right. But while our Christian calling has a twofold aspect, and we are dwellers in two worlds, our contribution as Christian citizens must be an integral contribution, and not (as it too often has been and still tends to be) a "schizophrenic" one. We shall betray our vocation and impair the value of what we strive to do if we function as "split personalities". If it is too much to say, as Wordsworth said in another connection of the infant, that in moving from the religious to the civic plane,

Trailing clouds of glory do we come,  
From God who is our home,

at least we should step into the natural world with the mood of the supernatural, and strive to correct the astigmatism of our fallen nature by looking out upon that world in the light of the theological virtues.

First, then, Faith. By faith, in relation to the challenge which secular events will always offer to the man who tries to live by the spirit, the Christian means something quite other than a merely dogged stoicism or an irrational optimism. It is by his faith in a Power beyond time that the Christian man can gain and hold an assurance that what happens within time has significance and makes sense, that history has a meaning, and that men are not the victims of a purposeless and capricious fate. This virtue is more precious than ever at a moment like this, when contemplation of the appalling potentialities of evil will and the succession of hideous events can overturn all our trust in the providential government of the world, *if we look only at them* and not at the same time at all that is good and true which challenges them, in belief and in practice. But, rightly understood, the horror and chaos that have broken out in our day can actually serve as an assurance to us, since they reveal that false and evil choices have their consequences and thus establish the rational basis upon which our life in this world rests. These things have happened as a logical upshot of a wrong view of the purposes for which men are brought together in community, and (which is less generally recognized) of a spiritless reliance on the automatic power of moral progress to put things right somehow. "The immoral idea of progress as a law of life", says Mr. Herbert Agar, "brought confusion and slackness to our world." But, he adds, what we have now a new chance to realize is that:

"We are not living in a madhouse where everything can happen but nothing can be explained. . . . The knowledge that the future is made by what we do and what

we are was dying out of men's minds. . . . We still can choose. We still can redeem our world if we are willing to take the trouble."\*

The disintegration of Faith during the last few decades has produced a mood that has effects far beyond the sphere generally accounted as religious. These effects reveal themselves not only in the spread of fatalism but in the growth of a sort of intellectual defeatism; they appear not only in the form of a despairing scepticism but in a dangerous increase of insincerity. A large number of those participating in and even commenting on public affairs to-day, who once really believed something and began as apostles of it, are now vainly trying to warm themselves at the embers of what they secretly know to be a dying fire. Their beliefs decay into the recitation of stereotyped and only half-sincere opinions, for the chill of which they strive to compensate themselves by the virulence of their attacks on those who have the courage, which they lack, to move on to new formulations. Comment without conviction has a demoralizing influence both upon those who write it and those who read it, and Christians must never descend to it. We ought to realize how important it is, even in regard to the most secular issues, to be aware of the kind and the degree of the faith we may have in our particular approach to them. We may, moreover, according to our temperament, have as much reason to suspect ourselves for the treasuring of unpopular opinions as for the espousal of popular ones, bearing in mind that it needs no heroism to proclaim "unpopular" views to those constitutionally disposed to prefer them. Again, while a realistic restraint of expectation is a not inappropriate element in the formation of a Christian judgment on affairs, cynicism is a merely destructive indulgence to which no Christian has any right to surrender. Such indulgence is apt to lead

\* *A Time for Greatness.*

to that very corrosive thing, a *negative* faith in the irresistibility of evil. This is a perversion of Christian truth into which Christians with a vivid apprehension of the depth and reality of sin can all too easily fall.

It is, on the contrary, part of the unending mission of the Church, through all human failure, sin and disillusion, to keep Hope alive in the world. Our Roman brethren are fortunate in having before them the reminder of their Penny Catechism that "the two sins against Hope are presumption and despair". In the prevalent reaction against liberalism most of us are on our guard against the first of these dangers. We know that man's achievements are frail not only because his disposition is sinful, but because he is by nature a limited being. We know that nothing man achieves can be for ever—or indeed for very long—secure; Nazism has given Europe a terrible revelation of this, so that to-day even the liberal has been made to realize afresh that "the condition upon which God has given liberty to man is eternal vigilance". No doubt there are times when we must

wait without hope,  
for hope would be hope for the wrong thing—

as so many hopes have been in this century. Even so, to wait does not require or even allow us to despair, since there are always God's opportunities to wait for, so that we have not only to pray but to watch. And is it not clear that this war has been restoring to Europe, through the faith and sacrifice of thousands, that opportunity which the self-seeking and cynicism of an earlier generation had cast away? And is not the wide expectation of a better society a stimulus to and even a pre-condition of getting one? The Christian knows—or should know—that none of men's designs in this world are likely to be realized just in the way they expect. But this does not mean that



men's secular hopes are necessarily invalid, or that there is anything particularly "spiritual" in being superior about them. On the contrary, there is a spiritual element in all disinterested hope which we ought to respect. And it is on the basis of our own noblest hopes, and not solely from the standpoint of pessimistic calculation, that we ought to speak, write and work in relation to current affairs. We have indeed to beware, in the often discouraging circumstances of to-day, of a neurotic tendency to get a sort of kick out of despair. This is a surrender to malice that is utterly un-Christian.

Such an attitude is not only a defiance of Hope; by the mood it engenders it is a menace to Charity, which is perhaps the hardest of all the theological virtues to preserve and to practise in the rough and tumble of political activity. In the first place, we can surely perceive how easily Charity can degenerate into an insipidity that will blur issues that may rather need resharpening, and we shall be rightly on our guard against this. When we are "speaking the truth in love" we have to remember that it is not only love that needs to be exemplified, but truth that has to be vindicated. Again, Charity is often difficult for us because in the discussion of public affairs persons appear as protagonists of policies or ideas, and it is so often effective—and therefore tempting—to discredit the person along with the policy. (This is a practice that has been developed by the Communists into a deliberate tactics, justifiable enough in those who make no profession of morality in the means they adopt in pursuit of their idealistic goal.) To love our neighbour as ourself is never more difficult than when our disinterested sympathies and passions are engaged. It is often hard for us to believe, or even to assume, as we must always strive to do, that those who oppose policies that seem perhaps of self-evident truth and value to us, may be acting from motives at least as

respectable as our own. Again, the duty of considering exactly what an opponent says and stands for and dealing only with that is a discipline which Christian controversialists have not been conspicuous for imposing upon themselves. But it is a pre-eminent responsibility of Christians at this time to maintain the most scrupulous standards of fairness, which is one way of fighting against the growth of intolerance and the totalitarian mind. This will surely be done most effectively not by a cold passion for justice, but by a warm oblation of charity. To love our enemies—and even our opponents—in that which most disinterestedly moves us will call for a conscious reliance upon grace, but by striving to attain this we shall engender a mood in which controversy can become creative and truth be born of love.

Finally, we shall do well to consider how reliance upon these supernatural virtues should enable the faithful to contribute both to the understanding and the handling of current affairs a quality of steadfastness of which the world in these days is greatly in need. There are indeed moments, as we look back on the recent history of our country and our civilization, when we are impressed by the power that good men—and notably Christian men—have manifested to save society from corruption and individuals from bondage. We remember such figures as Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler, William Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury, and we take courage from the thought of how much the fidelity and perseverance of a single dedicated man or woman may achieve. In a similar mood we may reflect with joy and gratitude upon the power of science to expand the capacities and relieve the strains of human life. But there are moments also, and moments that have perhaps come more frequently under the stress of the last thirty years, when we are almost overwhelmed by the apparent hopelessness of human effort, even when

inspired by the most disinterested idealism and by the intractability of the ever-enlarging problems of our all too complex civilization. If we are not to oscillate between the optimism and the pessimism for which not only our moods but a partial consideration of facts, both of the past and of the present, can afford so much encouragement, we must continually remind ourselves of the sanctions for our effort that will enable us to care for something more than the results which it may immediately show. The Christian will prove the unique quality of his service in politics precisely by his capacity to rise superior to that hunger for immediate rewards and satisfactions without the satisfaction of which even the most disinterested of humanitarian idealists is—quite naturally—so liable to lose heart and to let go. Just because “our citizenship is in heaven” and we know it, we should be of all men the best fitted to endure the ardours, and to embrace the privileges, of our citizenship on earth.